

Teachers L.E.A.D.

(Learn. Engage. Act. Discuss.)

A Study of Teacher Leaders' Perceptions on Engagement in School Improvement

by

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ABSTRACT

“If you treat an individual as he is, he will stay as he is,
but if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be
and could be, he will become what he ought and could be.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

Teacher leaders in public education have a great amount of responsibility on their shoulders in today's political climate. They are responsible for evaluating instruction, improving the teaching force, and raising student achievement. These responsibilities coupled with the day-to-day demands of effectively running a school have caused many teacher leaders to disengage from the true purpose of their work and have lead to retention rates that are less than desirable. This mixed methods action research study was conducted to investigate how participation in L.E.A.D. (Learn. Engage. Act. Discuss.) groups, influenced the self-perceptions teacher leaders have of their ability to engage in the change process at their schools. The innovation was a series of three action-driven sessions aimed at providing the participating teacher leaders with a space to discuss their roles in the change process at their school, their perceived engagement in those processes, and their perceived ability to navigate the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change. The greater purpose behind the design of this innovation was to provide teacher leaders with tools they could utilize that would support them in the realization that their level of engagement was not totally dependent on those around them. Through the L.E.A.D. groups, it became evident that the participating teacher leaders were resilient and optimistic individuals that, despite factors outside of their control demanding their time and energy, were still dedicated to the change process at their schools.

To my husband, Aaron.
You are my best friend and my biggest supporter.

To my parents, Robert and Christine.
You have always empowered me to believe in myself and this process was no exception.

To my LSC and the GR8 cohort – WE DID IT!

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Introduction and Context

It is impossible to properly discuss the ever evolving role of the teacher leader without first exploring the conditions that created the role in the first place. Educational school reform efforts have had a long and complicated history in the United States dating back to Horace Mann in the 1830's. Many, if not all prescribed reform efforts, have included components that focus on better preparing the nation's youth to be productive members of society through the increased quality of the teachers within our public education institutions.

In 1837, Mann's Common School Movement focused heavily on improving the training of teachers as well as providing an avenue for the sharing of information in order to better prepare people for citizenship in the expanding young republic (Jordan, 2014). As one of the first individuals in the United States to dedicate his career to the reform of public education, Horace Mann was already arguing that a key component to improving student achievement was to increase the quality of the teacher.

Fast-forward nearly 150 years and reforming our nation's educational system was still at the forefront of political debate and concern. The release of *A Nation At Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) contended that our public schools had "lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them" (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983). The commission went on to state that in order for "our country to function, citizens must be able to reach some common understandings on complex issues, often on short notice and on the basis of conflicting or incomplete evidence" (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for*

Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, 1983). As Mann had argued in 1837, the commission declared that improving education was the only way to prepare our citizens to be able to reach these common understandings often made under difficult circumstances. The NCEE's report concluded that the "declines in educational performance were in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted" (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983). They categorized their findings into four educational processes that contributed to these inadequacies: content, expectations, time, and teaching. The commission reported some disturbing statistics regarding the process of teaching and the quality of the average teacher. First, many individuals that were entering the teaching force had graduated in the bottom 25% of either their high school or collegiate careers. Second, there was a severe shortage of qualified individuals to teach in the fields of math and science. The commission also broached the subject of teacher compensation, stating that due to lower salaries, many teachers had to supplement their income with summer work and second jobs. Nearly 150 years after Horace Mann called for the improvement of student achievement through increased teacher quality, the National Commission on Excellence in Education echoed his findings.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) continued the call for improving the achievement of our nation's students by increasing the quality of their teachers. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was a bipartisan solution to the growing problem of declining student achievement in America. At this point, according to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), American

students were ranked 15 out of 32 countries in reading, 14 out of 32 countries in science, and 18 out of 32 countries in math. These results were frightening to many and cause for another increase in the expectations of our nation's teaching force. If our students were to regain their place at the top of these charts, then we needed to increase the quality of instruction they were receiving in the classroom. Under NCLB, teachers were required to be highly qualified. According to the NCLB Act, highly qualified means that all teachers "must be fully licensed or certified by the state and must not have had any certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis."

Teachers also must demonstrate subject matter competence (Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101).

In 2009, the Obama administration continued this push through the design of Race to the Top (RTTT) as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). RTTT required states to increase their reform efforts in several key areas. First, RTTT addressed the ongoing issue of student achievement by requiring states to "adopt standards and assessments that prepared students to succeed in college, the workplace, and the global economy" (2009). Teacher quality was also addressed and states were encouraged to "recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective educators" and place them in the highest need schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009a). Finally, the additional element of performance pay for teachers and principals was addressed. The element of performance pay was intended to reward teachers with documented levels of high student achievement, and incentivize the highest quality teachers to remain in the profession.

Leadership Context and Researcher Positionality

The Teacher Incentive Fund (2009b) was a national teacher and principal performance pay initiative established in 2006. TIF was established with an initial \$99

million appropriation to launch a variety of teacher and principal compensation systems. These systems were designed to reward individual educators for increased student achievement in high needs areas. The systems also focused on increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in hard-to-fill subjects and grade levels. The funding for TIF increased by \$200 million in 2009 with the addition of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and reached \$400 million in 2010 with the addition of the Appropriations Bill, a level that has remained through 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009b).

In 2010, the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College of Arizona State University and its district partners were awarded \$43.8 million in TIF dollars as a direct result of the Obama administrations RTTT competitive application. The funding was awarded to the Arizona Ready-for-Rigor Project that aimed to develop, implement, and assess a performance-based compensation system in historically struggling schools for the purpose of increasing student achievement and developing and retaining highly effective educators (Hegarty, 2012). The Office of School Partnership Grants was developed as the primary department responsible for supporting the implementation of the Arizona-Ready-for-Rigor Project initiatives.

At the time of this study, I worked as a Regional Master Teacher Leader for the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College in the Office of School Partnership Grants. Our team of Regional Master Teacher Leaders has supported over 60 schools state wide in implementing a comprehensive school reform system known as TAP—The System for Teacher and Student Advancement sponsored by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). The primary focus of the TAP System is to recruit the most qualified

individuals into teaching and retain them through providing ongoing professional development relevant to their content responsibilities. The TAP System also focuses on making the field of teaching more professionally attractive and financially rewarding to individuals. TAP was designed around four key elements that have been demonstrated to positively affect student achievement through improving teacher quality. These elements align neatly with the indicators of effectiveness identified in *A Nation At Risk*, *No Child Left Behind*, and *Race to the Top*. The TAP elements are:

- multiple career paths,
- performance-based compensation,
- ongoing applied professional growth,
- instructionally focused accountability,

The element of multiple career paths was designed to “allow teachers to pursue a variety of positions throughout their careers depending upon their interests, abilities and accomplishments” (*TAP evaluation and compensation guide*, 2010, p. 6). Through the multiple career paths teachers can serve in formal leadership roles as master or mentor teachers while still remaining in the classroom. As a condition of the multiple career paths element, schools were required to develop site-based leadership teams consisting of administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers. All master and mentor teachers were hired through a competitive hiring process. Master and mentor teachers defined as a classroom teachers who conduct field-testing, plan and deliver professional development, and support individual teachers. They are required to have “expert curricular knowledge, outstanding instructional skills, and the ability to work effectively with other adults”

(*TAP Evaluation and Compensation Guide*, 2010). Both the master and the mentor teacher responsibilities also include:

- supporting teachers with their individual instructional growth.
- conducting evaluations and coaching conferences with individual teachers.
- providing weekly professional development to clusters of teachers.

While the element of multiple career paths placed the focus on the leadership development of the teacher, performance-based compensation focused on financially rewarding teachers based on their individual performance in the classroom. Teachers had the opportunity to earn incentive pay based on a combination of their student achievement test scores and their classroom evaluation scores. Within the Arizona TAP system, teachers were categorized into several groups. The breakdown was typically as follows although the final decision was made by the individual school district involved with the reform:

- Group A: teachers who taught students in grades 3-8 or teachers who had student test scores assigned to them.
- Group B: teachers who taught students in grades K-2 or teachers who did not have student test scores assigned to them.

The performance based compensation system was further broken down for teachers based on their role within the TAP System. Master and mentor teachers were placed in a group where they are competing for performance pay only against the other master and mentor teachers on their campus.

These two elements, multiple career paths and performance-based compensation, addressed the call to recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective educators in our highest

need schools. By developing teachers professionally and providing them with additional compensation based on their performance, districts were beginning to address some of the inadequacies in their schools. The remainder of this study was grounded in the last two elements of ongoing applied professional growth and instructionally focused accountability, as these were the two elements that directly addressed the concern areas of content, expectations, time, and teaching as described in *A Nation At Risk*.

Problem of Practice

Ongoing Applied Professional Growth

The element of ongoing applied professional growth provides teachers with a system of professional development that is weekly, job-embedded, collaborative, student-centered and led by a master or mentor teacher. As part of this element, master and mentor teachers also provide teachers with individual coaching and classroom-based support.

NIET conducts an annual study designed to measure teacher perceptions and overall satisfaction with the TAP system and found that many of the Arizona teachers reported high levels of support for the ongoing applied professional growth that they were receiving from their master and mentor teachers. At the time of this study, the responses from classroom teachers in one Arizona school district showed moderate to strong support for the element of ongoing applied professional growth on their campuses (see Table 1). These percentages are in comparison to the national TAP school average of 87%. Five of the nine schools indicated higher than average support for this element, four schools indicated close to average support of this element, and only one school indicated support for this element that was far below the district or national average. This form of

support provided to teachers on a weekly basis is critical to the nations call for increasing student achievement through improved teacher quality and is clearly supported by these Arizona teachers.

Table 1

Percentage of Teachers in Support of Ongoing Applied Professional Growth

School	AZ % of teachers moderately/strongly supporting ongoing applied professional growth 2012-13	AZ % of teachers moderately/strongly supporting ongoing applied professional growth 2013-14	% of students participating in free/reduced lunch program	2014 School Letter Grade
School A	X ^a	95%	45%	C
School B	75%	95%	40%	C
School C	40%	51%	27%	B
School D	93%	88%	32%	C
School E	X ^b	79%	27%	B
School F	78%	80%	45%	C
School G	86%	100%	45%	F
School H	91%	97%	43%	B
School I	80%	82%	35%	B

^aSchool A did not have teacher response data at the time of this study; ^bSchool E did not have teacher response data at the time of this study.

Instructionally Focused Accountability

The element of instructionally focused accountability focuses on utilizing a comprehensive, research-based rubric to evaluate teachers on the instructional soundness of their pedagogy. Teachers are formally evaluated a minimum of four times per school

year by all members of the leadership team including the master and mentor teachers. Following each evaluation teachers receive a one-on-one conference with their evaluator where a reinforcement and refinement of the lesson are discussed. During this conference, teachers also engage in a targeted model demonstrating how to improve in their pedagogical area of refinement. TAP leadership teams in Arizona have been trained to view these conferences as supportive opportunities to provide individualized, differentiated professional development to teachers.

The same study conducted by the NIET in 2013-14 found that Arizona teachers reported high levels of support for the element of instructionally focused accountability. At the time of this study, the responses from classroom teachers in the same Arizona school district discussed above, showed moderate to strong support for the element of instructionally focused accountability on their campuses (see Table 2). These percentages are in comparison to the national TAP school average of 89%. Four of the nine schools indicated higher than average support for this element, three schools indicated close to average support of this element, and only two schools indicated support for this element that was far below the district or national average.

Table 2

Percentage of Teachers in Support of Instructionally Focused Accountability

School	AZ % of teachers moderately/strongly supporting instructionally focused accountability 2012-13	AZ % of teachers moderately/strongly supporting instructionally focused accountability 2013-14	% of students participating in free/reduced lunch program	2014 School Letter Grade
School A	X ^a	100%	45%	C
School B	81%	84%	40%	C
School C	57%	54%	27%	B
School D	87%	85%	32%	C
School E	X ^b	71%	27%	B
School F	84%	95%	45%	C
School G	88%	95%	45%	F
School H	81%	94%	43%	B
School I	73%	92%	35%	B

^aSchool A did not have teacher response data at the time of this study; ^bSchool E did not have teacher response data at the time of this study.

The element of instructionally focused accountability is another example of how schools can address some of the stated inadequacies of the education system and it is clear based on the data above that teachers in these Arizona TAP schools are in favor of this type of support from their leadership teams.

Retention

From retention data collected beginning with the first wave of TAP implementation in 2010, it was evident that high numbers of master and mentor teachers

participating in the Arizona Ready-for-Rigor Project were dissatisfied with their experiences in the role. In Wave 1 of implementation, 22 individuals were hired as master teachers and 28 individuals were hired as mentor teachers. By 2014, only four of those original master teachers were still in their position and only eight of the original mentor teachers were still in the position. This represents an overall retention rate of 18.2% for master teachers and 28.6% for mentor teachers (see Figure 1).

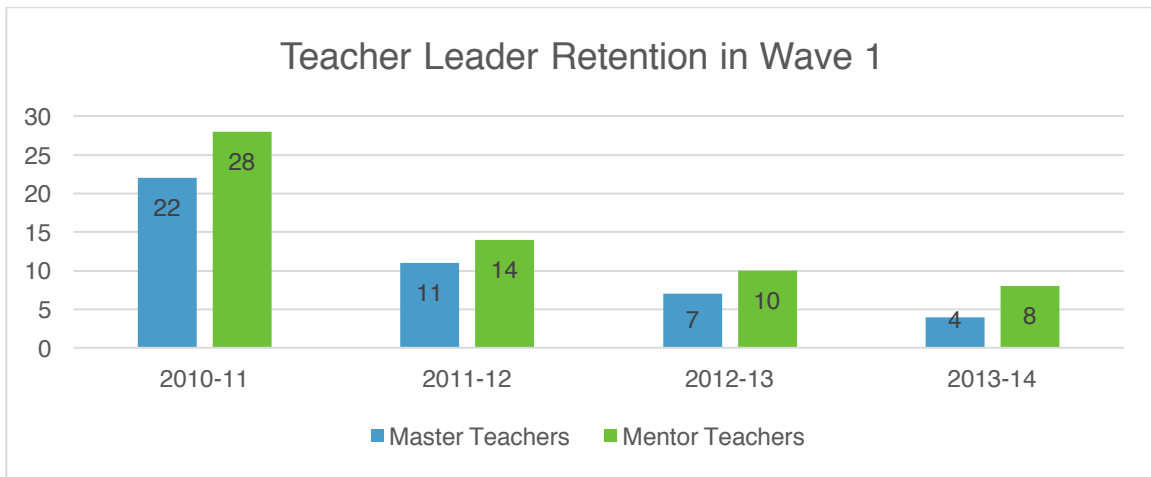


Figure 1. Number of master and mentor teachers retained in Wave 1

In Wave 2 of implementation, 63 new master teachers and 129 new mentor teachers were hired through the element of multiple career paths. By 2014, 30 of the original 63 master teachers and 46 of the of the original 129 mentor teachers were still in the position. This represents an overall retention rate of only 47.6 and 35.7% respectively (see Figure 2).

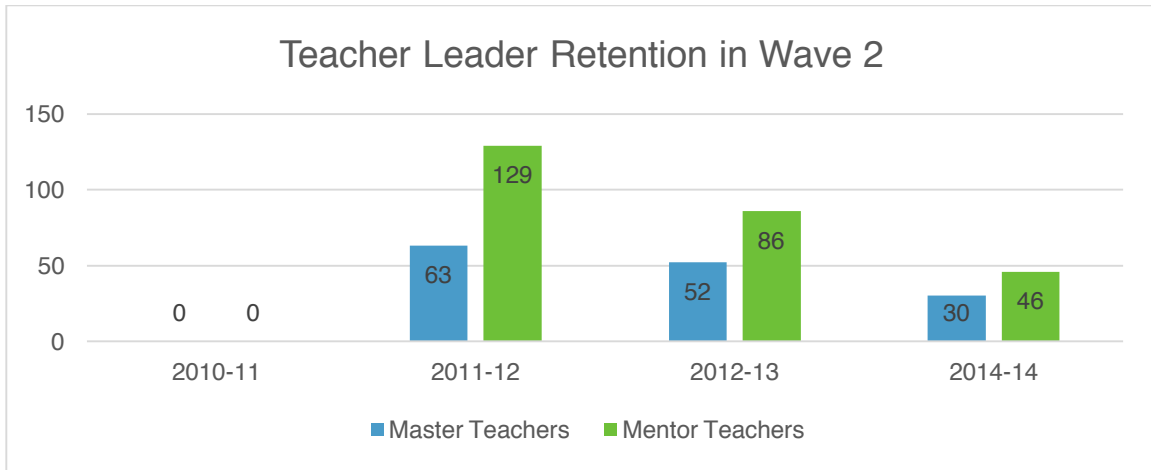


Figure 2. Number of master and mentor teachers retained in Wave 2

In Wave 3 of implementation, 29 new master teachers and 57 new mentor teachers were hired into the role. By 2014, 20 of the original 29 master teachers were still in the position and 35 of the original 57 mentor teachers were still in the position. This represents an overall retention rate of 69% for master teachers and 61.4% for mentor teachers (see Figure 3).

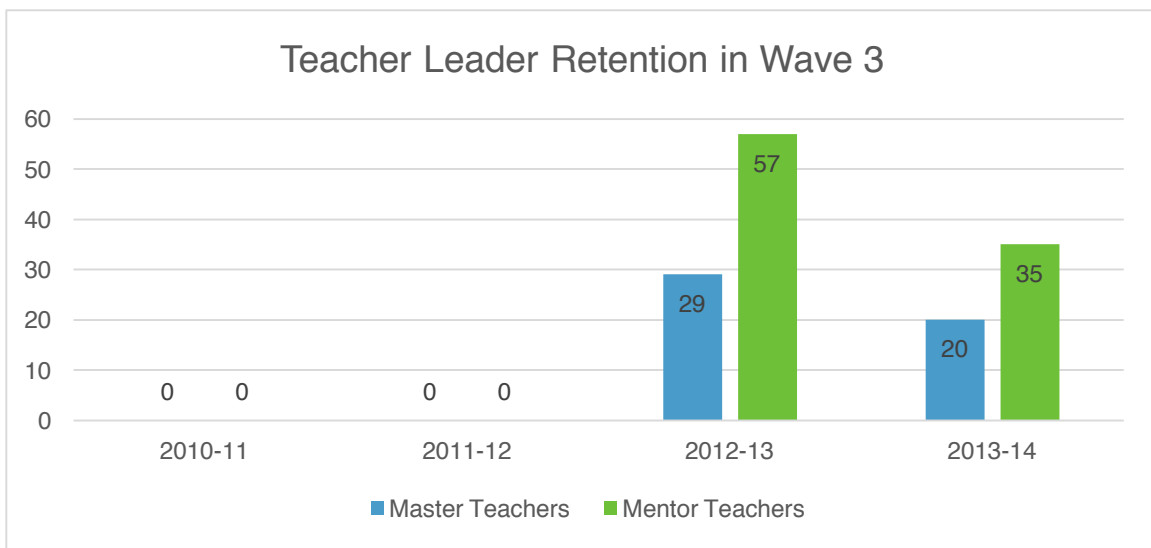


Figure 3. Number of master and mentor teachers retained in Wave 3

When all three waves of implementation were combined, the overall retention rate of teacher leaders across the state was less than half with a total of 54 master teachers (47%) remaining in their positions for the life of the grant and 89 mentor teachers (41.6%).

One hypothesis as to why teacher leaders are exiting the role at this alarming rate is that they do not perceive themselves as being engaged in the change process at their school. Another hypothesis as to why teacher leaders are leaving the role is that the conditions of the day-to-day job responsibilities differ from their initial expectations of the job and they do not feel empowered to make changes to the way they fulfill these responsibilities.

In an attempt to derive more details from the data, one school district was chosen for further examination. The school district was situated in the southwest region of Phoenix, supporting nearly 6,000 students in nine schools. As a result of implementing the TAP System, these nine schools had developed site-based leadership teams consisting of administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers. The district total was 14 administrators, 18 master teachers, and 34 mentor teachers. At the time of this study, five of the eighteen or 28% of the master teachers and 15 of the 34 or 44% of mentor teachers indicated they would not be returning to their position for the following school year. This represented the highest turnover rate for these teacher leader positions in this district in three years of implementation, which has troubling implications. This was a problem because it indicated that the conditions for this population were getting worse rather than improving over time as one might expect.

A small sample consisting of six teacher leaders from four separate campuses within this district were interviewed for an informative cycle of action research. In the interviews, individuals were asked a combination of questions derived from the Gallup Q12 Workplace Engagement Survey and the Arizona State University Working Conditions Survey. Throughout the interviews, the teacher leaders consistently discussed an underlying feeling of being unable to spend their time effectively supporting their assigned teachers due to the competing demands of the role.

Throughout the interview, participants also discussed the balance of being responsible for teaching in the classroom, supporting other classroom teachers, and a participating member of the leadership team. Another participant shared the following regarding balance of time and engagement:

So, the hardest thing is that you're always in this split. When I felt really good about the coaching I did, I felt that I was behind with my kids and then vice versa. If I was doing really good and being on top of my classroom, then I felt like the coaching pieces were not as strong as they needed to be. I was always trying to find a balance between making sure to uphold my classroom and making sure to uphold my coaching.

This quote provided insight into one struggle that teacher leaders face – the balance of time spent coaching and time spent teaching. This quote also illustrated the importance of quality teaching and successful coaching that individuals in this position felt pressured to attain.

Another reoccurring theme that emerged from the interviews was that these teacher leaders did not feel like a significant member of the leadership team. Instead, they felt as though their participation was more “token” than purposeful. One participant described it as follows:

I feel like you are just shuffled into the decision making process with the leadership team. We always talked about leadership teams, leadership teams, leadership teams (in training) but it always felt like administrators made the decisions and then we got the stamp of approval.

This quote highlighted the importance of shared leadership and the feeling of this teacher leader that she wasn't truly engaged in the change process at her school.

From the data collected on teacher support for the elements of ongoing applied professional growth and instructionally focused accountability, teacher leader retention numbers, and the words of the teacher leaders themselves, it was evident that this population was in need of an intervention.

Research Questions

Although ongoing applied professional growth and instructionally focused accountability are research-based elements shown to contribute to the process of raising student achievement and increasing teacher quality, there is concern that the current conditions of school reform do not allow teacher leaders to perceive themselves as meaningfully engaged in the change process at their schools. This information led to the following research questions:

1. How do teacher leaders perceive themselves as engaged in the change process at their school?
2. How does the use of L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to engage in the change process aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?
3. What are teacher leaders' perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the innovation?

Thus, the purpose of this action research study was to investigate how participation in action-driven engagement groups, referred to as L.E.A.D. groups (Learn. Engage. Act. Discuss.), influence the self-perceptions teacher leaders have of their ability to engage in the change process at their schools. For the purpose of this action research, I will use the term engagement hereafter to mean a “positive, fulfilling, affective motivational state of work related well-being that can be seen as the antipode of burnout” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010).

Innovation

My innovation included working with six teacher leaders across grades K-8 who were participating in the TAP comprehensive school reform effort in the state of Arizona. Using components of the Gallup Q12 workplace engagement survey and the Utrecht Engagement Scale (UWES), participants assessed their current levels of engagement. They then met monthly as L.E.A.D. groups and planned for ways to increase their engagement in the change processes at their site. The participating teacher leaders committed to personal action over the course of the month and then reflected on how that action influenced their perception of their ability to engage with their work. We utilized a consistent set of reflection questions each month to debrief their experiences. These participant reflections were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the L.E.A.D. groups. Over the course of the innovation, the connection between teacher leader engagement levels and their perceived involvement in the school improvement process on their campus was examined. This was done through the analysis of sections of the various surveys (Q12 and UWES), participant reflections, and collected artifacts created by the teacher leaders themselves.

Review of Literature

To better understand the problem of teacher leader engagement in comprehensive school reform, I reviewed the literature of three key concepts. In the first section of this review, I focused on literature related to the history of school reform in Arizona beginning with *A Nation At Risk*. Following that section, literature related to engagement and distributed leadership was examined in an effort to understand how best to engage and retain high quality individuals in the teacher leader role. In the concluding section, the following theories were defined and connected to this action research study: change theory and engagement theory.

School Reform in Arizona

School reform has a complex history in the legislation of Arizona. In the past two decades alone, the state of Arizona has incorporated several different reform structures aimed at addressing student deficiencies and increasing student achievement through improving the quality of teachers within its public schools. For the purposes of this study, I will examine three widespread reform structures implemented across the state of Arizona in response to the national call for school improvement. These three structures are the Career Ladder program, the Classroom Site Fund, and the Framework for Arizona Educator Effectiveness.

A Nation at Risk and the Career Ladder Program (1985)

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) stated in *A Nation at Risk* that the “declines in education performance were the result of inadequacies in four educational processes” (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A*

Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, 1983). The four educational processes identified were content, expectations, time, and teaching.

Content. The NCEE recommended that school districts across the nation focus on providing students with content that was appropriate to satisfy the diverse aspirations, abilities, and needs of individuals. They stated that their beliefs were grounded in the foundation that everyone is born with the ability and urge to learn and that it is the responsibility of the school to equip all students with the skills necessary to be productive, working citizens. The committee directed their recommendations towards both the “nature of the content available and the needs of particular learners” (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983). They were explicit in stating that curricular content must be differentiated and appropriate for all subgroups of students, from gifted to disabled and from college bound to industry bound. Some of the specific content recommendations written in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) included strengthening the state and local high school graduation requirements to include four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science. The committee elaborated further and defined what they meant by “strengthening” the content in each subject area. Those details are described in greater detail below.

The recommendation of the NCEE in the area of English included teaching students how to “comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and use what they read.” Our schools were to produce high school graduates who could “write well-organized papers as well as listen effectively and discuss ideas intelligently” (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for*

Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, 1983, Appendix A). In the area of mathematics, the committee recommended that schools prepare high school graduates to understand “geometric and algebraic concepts, elementary probability and statistics, and estimate, measure, and test the accuracy of their calculations” (*A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: a report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983, Appendix A). The report also stressed the importance of all students being able to apply these mathematics skills to solve everyday problems and situations. Within the content area of science, the NCEE recommended that students be provided with an introduction to “the physical and biological sciences, the scientific methods of inquiry and reasoning, and the social and environmental implications of scientific and technological developments” (*A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: a report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983, Appendix A). As was the case with the mathematics recommendations, the NCEE also stressed the importance of all students gaining the ability to apply scientific knowledge to their everyday life problems and situations. The social studies recommendations included teaching students about “their places and possibilities within the larger social and cultural structure while understanding both the ancient and contemporary ideas that have shaped the world” (*A Nation at Risk: The imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983, Appendix A). Also within social studies were the fundamentals of economic and politics and free and repressed societal differences. It was determined that this knowledge would create informed and committed citizens. Finally, the committee felt as though high school

graduates should be equipped with a basic understanding of computers and how they could be used as a support in the study of the other content areas.

Expectations. In addition to the content recommendations, the NCEE also determined that schools should set higher expectations for student academic performance and conduct. These higher expectations included raising the admission requirements for colleges and universities across the country. It was stated that colleges and universities should accept applicants based on their grade performance from high school in the required content courses as well as their performance on standardized tests in these same areas (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983). It is at this point that we begin to see the nation's focus shift to standardized testing as a way to measure academic achievement. The NCEE recommended that standardized assessments be "administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another." The committee believed that this process would: "certify the student's credentials, identify the need for remedial intervention, and identify the opportunity for accelerated work" (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983, Appendix A).

The area of expectations also included a focus on the rigor of the materials and tools used to deliver content to students. The committee believed that textbooks must be "upgraded and updated to assure more rigorous content" (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983, Appendix A). It was stated that publishing companies should be required to provide school districts with proof that their products were appropriate and high quality and that they included the most up-to-date information and technology.

Time. The NCEE's recommendations with regards to time focused on increasing the amount of time students actually spent in school as well as utilizing that time to the fullest extent possible. With regards to increasing the amount of time students spend in school, the committee recommended that all schools should "consider seven hour school days and 200 to 220 day school years" (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983, Appendix A). In addition to the time students physically spend at school, the NCEE stated that the time students spend in the classroom should be maximized through better organization of the day and more effective classroom management techniques. Interestingly, the committee put the primary burden of managing student conduct on administrative policies and procedures recommending firm and fair school-wide codes of conduct, attendance policies with sanctions, and alternative classroom placements for disruptive students (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, 1983).

Teaching. A Nation at Risk (1983, Appendix A) divided the recommendations for teaching into seven parts, each designed around the goals of improving the preparation of our nation's teachers or making the teaching profession more respected and rewarding. The seven recommendations are briefly described below.

1. The success of colleges and universities teacher preparation programs should be judged by how well their graduates perform in the classroom.
2. Teacher salaries should be competitive and performance-based. Any promotion, tenure, or retention decisions should be tied to the evaluation system and include a peer review component.

3. Teachers should be employed on an 11-month contract to allow adequate time for professional development.
4. Teachers should be divided into competency levels such as beginner, experienced, or master.
5. The lack of highly qualified math and science teachers must be addressed immediately. This recommendation included such tactics as alternatively certifying graduate students and retired scientists.
6. Grants and loans should be utilized as financial incentives to invite outstanding candidates to join the teaching profession.
7. Teachers designated at the highest level of their profession should be involved in the design of teacher preparation programs as well as the supervision of beginning teachers.

According to a working paper released by the Center for Educator Compensation Reform and the Arizona Department of Education, Arizona attempted to address these inadequacies beginning in 1985 utilizing the Career Ladder program. With an initial 14 schools and an additional 14 phased in over the next three years, the state department saw the Career Ladder program as a way to “capitalize on the recommendations from the national report, *A Nation at Risk* (Center for Educator Compensation Reform, 2010, *Case Summary: Arizona Career Ladder Program, 2006*, p. 3). Specifically, the goals of the Career Ladder program were to:

- increase student achievement by attracting and retaining talented teachers – addressing the educational process of teaching.

- recognize and compensate teachers for their instructional excellence – addressing the educational processes of time and teaching.
- motivate teachers to perform at higher skill levels through professional growth – addressing the educational processes of expectations and teaching.
- increase collegiality among teachers (Center for Educator Compensation Reform, 2010, *Case Summary: Arizona Career Ladder Program, 2006*).

All new teachers were required to participate in the Career Ladder program whereas veteran teachers (anyone with more than one year of experience) were allowed to opt in or out of the program as they saw fit. In addition, first year teachers previously participating in the program could opt out in their second year of teaching. Career Ladder teachers were required to provide evidence of student growth, increased levels of teaching skills, and increased levels of responsibility and professional growth in order to qualify for salary increases (Center for Educator Compensation Reform, 2010, *Case Summary: Arizona Career Ladder Program, 2006*). While the implementation of this program may have “transformed the way the state compensated educators” the results as to how the program achieved its goals of increasing student achievement by means of increased teacher professional growth and collegiately remains inconclusive (Dowling, Murphy, & Wang, 2007, p. 3).

Funding appropriation for the career ladder program at the state level ceased in 1994 and the fiscal responsibility of maintaining the program shifted to the local districts. According to the Arizona State Department of Education, only 28 of the state’s over 200 school districts maintain an active career ladder program today showcasing that the program did not have a widespread effect on the students and teachers of Arizona.

No Child Left Behind and the Classroom Site Fund (2000)

The second reform structure examined was the Classroom Site Fund (CSF), commonly referred to as Proposition 301, which was institutionalized in 2000 in response to the No Child Left Behind Act. Arizona voters passed a sales tax increase that was to be used for specific educational purposes. The CSF infused approximately \$445 million annually into education programs in Arizona with approximately \$390 million going directly into school districts and schools. It was defined in legislation that the “CSF revenues be dedicated to three broad initiatives; across the board pay increases for teachers (20%), performance-based pay increases for teachers (40%), and site-chosen classroom initiatives (40%)” (White & Heneman, 2002, p. 11). Specifically, the goals of the site chosen classroom initiatives were to:

- reduce class size.
- implement standardized test (AIMS) intervention programs.
- provide professional development opportunities for teachers.
- dropout prevention.
- provide teacher liability insurance (White & Heneman, 2002, p. 12).

So while the CSF required that the majority of monies be utilized to provide high quality professional development and compensate teachers based on performance, it was “silent on specifics” resulting in districts creating and implementing their own designs and requirements (Aportela, 2005, p. 1). Proposition 301 dollars were often evenly distributed among teachers at a school provided individuals could produce evidence of meeting the criteria established by their district. These criteria often involved attending a designated number of professional development sessions, creating a portfolio of

professional work, or presenting to colleagues on a particular educational topic. In 2005, almost all school districts in Arizona reported meeting their 301 performance-based goals despite the fact that nearly 33% of them did not attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is the measurement defined in No Child Left Behind that “allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine how students in every public school and district are performing academically according to results on standardized tests”e*No child left behind act*, 2002, p. 1478). This dichotomy is evidence of a clear disconnect between the goals of No Child Left Behind, which were to raise student achievement scores as measured by standardized tests, and the results of Arizona’s implementation of the Classroom Site Fund.

Race to the Top and the Framework for Arizona Educator Effectiveness (2010)

The third reform structure examined within the state of Arizona was the Framework for Arizona Educator Effectiveness, also known as Arizona Senate Bill 1040 (SB 1040). This framework was Arizona’s response to the requirements of the Obama administration’s competitive Race to the Top (RTTT) grants. Eligibility for RTTT was, again, conditional upon the alignment of teacher effectiveness with student achievement; however, it seemed to singly focus on the accountability of teachers rather than the development of teachers (United States Department of Education 2012, 2014).

In 2010, in an attempt to qualify for the highly sought after RTTT funding, Arizona passed legislation that required teacher evaluation systems to be aligned with student performance (LeFevre, 2011). SB 1040 mandated that the “State Board of Education adopt and maintain a model framework for a teacher evaluation instrument that included quantitative data on student academic progress that accounted for between

thirty-three percent and fifty percent of the evaluation outcomes” (LeFevre, 2011, p. 1). Schools and districts were now required to evaluate a teacher multiple times over the course of the school year utilizing a rubric based instrument that defined best instructional practices. This instrument needed to meet the requirements set forth by the State Board of Education and be implemented by the 2012-2013 school year.

Arizona took the policy on teacher effectiveness one step further in 2013-14 with the implementation of Arizona House Bill 2823 (HB 2823). HB 2823 now required school districts to report the results of teachers’ evaluations to the state and use them to “improve teacher performance” (*Arizona House Bill 2823*, 2012). While no specific steps to professionally develop teachers were outlined, under HB 2823, districts were required to:

- establish performance levels for teachers
- develop guidelines for transferring the lowest performing teachers
- implement incentives for teachers in the highest performance levels
- provide incentives for high performing teachers to transfer to low performing schools (*Arizona House Bill 2823*, 2012).

Based on these policies, it is easy to perceive that Arizona legislators have interpreted the focus on increasing teacher effectiveness to mean that our state must hold teachers more accountable for their professional outcomes. The measures that the state has taken appear to be focusing much more on the punitive consequences of lowered student achievement on tests versus the support and professional growth in instructional practices of teachers (*Arizona House Bill 2823*, 2012).

Arizona Educator Effectiveness and TAP System (2010)

In response to the requirements placed on schools by the passing of SB 1040 and HB 2823, 60 schools across 12 districts partnered with Arizona State University and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). This partnership involved implement an existing structure, known as the TAP System that utilized an approved evaluation rubric with teacher performance levels and addressed the financial incentive requirement. The TAP System was first introduced in 1999 by the Milken Family Foundation and has spread to 12 states across the nation offering “powerful career advancement and leadership opportunities for educators, a fair and transparent evaluation process that is linked to job-embedded professional development and performance-based compensation” (J.H. Barnett, Rinthapol, & Hudgens, 2014, p. 3). One of the overarching goals of the TAP system is to increase “instructional effectiveness across the school and district and accelerate growth in student academic achievement” (Barnett et al., 2014).

Where Arizona’s legislative response to No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top seemed to forget about the call to increase educator effectiveness and focused primarily on often-punitive accountability of teachers for student achievement, NIET, ASU, and their partnering districts focused on the improvement of teachers through the elements of instructionally focused accountability and ongoing applied professional growth. A 2013 study conducted by Interactive, Inc., a national firm specializing in education program evaluation, found that teachers within the TAP system felt supported by their leadership teams and they grew in their teaching practice. The researchers went on to further state that “on any particular day more than 60% of teachers reported using feedback from their evaluations in their classroom instruction and more than 50% when

asked on any given day responded that they were currently receiving individual classroom coaching” (Mann, Leutscher, & Reardon, 2013).

It is within this context that the engagement and retention of teacher leaders becomes so critical. These teacher leaders are part of a leadership team that is responsible for supporting all classroom teachers in the areas of teaching, expectations, and content. As well, they are charged with evaluating teachers and providing individual classroom coaching. If we are unable to engage and retain our teacher leaders who are proven to be some of our most effective individuals, it is unlikely that we will be able to increase the retention rates of the career teachers they support either. According to the latest study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, of the “3,377,900 public school teachers who were teaching during the 2011–12 school year, 84 percent remained at the same school (stayers), eight percent moved to a different school (movers), and eight percent left the profession (leavers)” (Goldring, Taie, Riddles, & Owens, 2014, p. 3). This exodus of teachers can be detrimental to student achievement as well as school morale, school culture, and financial stability (J. H. Barnett & Hudgens, 2014). Salary adjustment and performance pay alone can add up to between \$5,000 and \$12,000 per teacher leader, money that our public school systems do not have to lose on a yearly basis, not to mention the time and experience that exits the school each time an individual leaves one of these positions.

Table 3

Summary of History of School Reform in Arizona Since 1985

	Career Ladder	Classroom site fund	AZ educator effectiveness	TAP
Focus of Reform	Recognize and compensate teachers for instructional excellence. Motivate teachers to perform at higher skill levels through professional growth. Increase collegiality among teachers.	Across the board pay increases for teachers. Performance-based pay increases for teachers. Site-chosen classroom initiatives.	Establish performance levels for teachers. Develop guidelines for transferring the lowest performing teachers. Implement incentives for teachers in the highest performance levels. Provide incentives for high performing teachers to transfer to low performing schools.	Career advancement for teachers. Leadership opportunities for teachers. Fair and transparent evaluation process. Job- embedded professional development. Performance- based compensation.
Financial Implication		\$445 million/annually		\$48 million over 5-year period
Motivation Focus	Extrinsic and Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Extrinsic	Extrinsic and Intrinsic

Table 3 summarizes the four major reform structures in Arizona examined in the literature for this study. In addition to the major focus and financial implications of each structure, the component of motivational focus was added. This sets up the next section of this paper, which is engagement.

Deci and Ryan (2011) suggested that the human organism has evolved to be inherently active, intrinsically motivated, and oriented to develop naturally through learning experiences. These inherently natural characteristics developed over time, were

central to one's learning, and affected by social environments (Deci & Ryan, 2011). Their work focused on three universal psychological needs for optimal human function; these needs were autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Autonomy is the freedom to be self-directed, which leads to higher engagement and better results. Competence is defined as the opportunity to challenge the status quo and get better at a craft whereby producing better results. And finally, relatedness describes a sense of purpose where one feels they are adding something positive to the work place, community, or world (Deci & Ryan, 2011). The extent to which an individual positively experiences these three needs greatly determines their sense of engagement. It has consistently been determined that extrinsic factors such as competition and monetary rewards are effective for mechanical skill tasks that require following rules and producing a simple product (Deci & Ryan, 2011). For any task that requires cognitive skills and creative thinking, these factors actually undermined an individual's engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2011).

Teaching is a fast paced and complex profession that requires individuals to think critically, problem solve, and make decisions quickly; all skills that Deci and Ryan (2011) would argue are undermined by extrinsic motivational factors. Yet when we examine the motivational factors of the reform structures in Arizona since 1985 we see that two of them (Classroom Site Fund and AZ Educator Framework) put their primary focus here and all four include an extrinsic component. If the goal of school reform is to raise student achievement through increasing the quality of their teachers, using structures that do not intrinsically motivate our educators seems like a critical oversight.

The following section of this literature review is focused on how teachers are currently experiencing this motivational state of engagement in the United States today.

Engagement

Engagement is defined as the “positive, fulfilling, affective motivational state of work related well-being that can be seen as the antipode of burnout” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010, p. 1). Teachers spend a substantial part of their lives working in schools, and our nation already has a significant problem preventing burnout in its teacher population resulting in low annual retention rates. In addition to the 16 percent of leavers and movers discussed by Goldring et al.(2014), we must also acknowledge the rising loss of some of our newest teachers. In a report published in collaboration between the Alliance for Excellent Education and the New Teacher Center, it was noted “one million teachers move in and out of schools annually, and between 40 and 50 percent quit within five years” (Neason, 2014). It is critical that our teachers begin to experience high levels of engagement if we hope to address the retention rates we are currently experiencing.

Gallup has been working with organizations to achieve “breakthroughs in employee engagement and organizational culture” for over 80 years (*State of America’s schools: The path to winning again in education*, 2014). In 2013, with the release of their *State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders* report, Gallup sounded the alarm for more engaged, talented workers in this country. This call was reinforced by the results of the 2012 nationwide Gallup Q12 survey; a survey that identifies 12 vetted and action-oriented workplace elements with proven connections to critical performance outcomes.

The Gallup Q12 survey categorizes participant responses into three categories; engaged, not engaged, and actively disengaged. Engaged is defined as “involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to one’s work.” These individuals know what is required of them at work and are constantly seeking new and better ways to reach desired outcomes. Gallup defines not engaged as possibly “satisfied with one’s job but not emotionally connected to the workplace.” These individuals are “unlikely to devote much discretionary effort to their work.” Finally, actively disengaged is defined as “dissatisfied with their workplace and likely to spread negativity to their coworkers” (*State of America’s Schools: The Path to Winning Again in Education*, 2014). Of 7,200 K-12 teachers surveyed using the Gallup Q12, nearly 70% self-reported as not engaged in their work. The responses were further broken down into 56% of teachers reporting that they were not engaged in their work and 13% reporting that they were actively disengaged in their work. The fact that only 31% of teachers reported being engaged in their work should be of concern since disengaged teachers are less likely to “bring energy, insights, and resilience” to their daily work (*State of America’s schools: The Path to Winning Again in Education*, 2014). They are also less likely to “trust, encourage, and engage their fellow teachers,” all three skills which are critical to the success of teacher leaders.

I would have been remiss if I had not examined what the literature says about the leadership conditions surrounding high levels of engagement in school reform. The next section of this review examines distributed leadership and the conditions it creates for teachers in school reform.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is defined in different ways by different people in different professional fields, but one thing that all of these definitions have in common is the belief that distributed leadership is a form of practice that emerges from interactions among leaders, followers, and is contextual to the situation (Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2005). Distributed leadership is less about formally designated leaders or their functions, routines, and structures but rather is a product of the interactions between leaders (Spillane, 2005).

According to Gronn (2002), the first reference to distributed leadership came in the 1950's from the field of social psychology. The idea then seemed to disappear for nearly three decades when it again resurfaced in the 1990s as a component of organizational theory. Distributed leadership also began to take hold in education around this time and grew rapidly over the course of the next ten years where it ultimately became incorporated into the curriculums of the two leading national leadership reform organizations; the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board in Educational Administration (NPBEA; Gronn, 2002).

The CCSSO and NPBEA were not the only educational organizations to link distributed leadership to school reform. One of the key factors in successful school reform is the distribution of leadership responsibilities (Elmore, 2002; Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2004). If schools hoped to be successful in raising student achievement and increasing teacher quality as a result of the sweeping national reform efforts, they were going to have to let go of the idea of a “charismatic leader” saving the day and embrace

the idea of “multiple leaders working together to mobilize and guide teachers in the process of instructional change” (Spillane, 2001, p. 143).

As distributed leadership continued to gain traction in schools grappling with the expectations of political school reform, educational researchers began to examine the power of multiple individuals collectively carrying the load of leadership (Spillane & Healey, 2010). It was discovered that in environments where teachers “learned from one another through mentoring, observation, peer coaching, and mutual reflection,” the generation of teacher leadership was significantly enhanced (Little, 1995). With this enhanced level of leadership within schools, teacher leaders were able to help others “embrace their goals, understand the changes that were needed to strengthen their teaching, and work towards improvements” (Harris, 2004). In schools where teacher quality was increasing as a result of learning together and sharing best practices, student achievement was also improving (Lieberman, 2000; Little 1990, 2000; Silins & Mulford, 2002). It was becoming evident that a connection could be made; distributed leadership led to increased teacher capacity and this has led to increased student achievement (Harris, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

To address the research questions guiding this action research study, I utilized a framework of technical, normative, and political dimensions that situate the literature and theory into the context of school reform. I then draw upon the research of engagement theory and change theory to support the exploration of teacher leader engagement and retention in school reform. The following sections discuss Oakes’ framework of change dimensions, each theory, and their relation to this action research study.

Oakes' Framework

In 1992, Oakes utilized a framework of three change dimensions; technical, normative, and political to examine the consequences of academically tracking students as a response to reform initiatives aimed at improving student achievement. Through her research she discovered that without a focus on the technical, normative, and political dimensions surrounding the implementation, development, and evaluation of change, “school structures and practices will remain impervious to reform” (Oakes, 1992). Oakes further reports that without “well-specified and proven alternatives” to the current practice, “educators will remain ambivalent” to the reform initiative (1992). As the role of the teacher leader is a direct product of school reform it makes sense that I would investigate the growing problem of engagement and retention through these three dimensions as well. The following section will provide more detail on the three dimensions outlined by Oakes.

Technical dimension. The technical dimension of Oakes' framework incorporates the “organization, curricular, and pedagogical strategies” that are required to change as a result of reform (Oakes, 1992). A focus on this dimension is critical because the individuals within a school may not even recognize that these technical strategies of organization, curriculum, and pedagogy are deeply rooted in their school culture, therefore confronting them is often quite difficult. Guidance about how to implement a comprehensive set of changes in school organization, curriculum, and teaching must be provided. The concept of a teacher leader who supports all teachers on the campus, not just new teachers, is an active decision-making member of the leadership team, and conducts formal evaluations is often a new technical strategy for schools. A “single new

technique can't possibly smooth the way for such major structural changes” (Oakes, 1992, p. 17). The technical changes required to successfully implement these structures “require simultaneous attention to a myriad of other practices that correspond to it” and if the change is “fundamentally different it may clash with other school practices” if not given the proper attention (Oakes, 1992).

Normative dimension. While technical supports are necessary for successful changes to organization, curriculum, and teaching, it is also critical that “practitioners be committed to the reform and that alternative practices make sense to them” (Oakes, 1992). Without this commitment it is unlikely that the change will occur in a sustainable way; however, these changes can often conflict with deeply ingrained organizational norms. These norms “consciously and unconsciously drive the day-to-day educational practices” and must be addressed upfront (Oakes, 1992). For example, if an administrator is not accustomed to the tenets of distributed leadership, it is going to be difficult for them to commit to ensuring that teacher leaders are active decision-making members of the leadership team. If career teachers are uncomfortable receiving evaluative feedback from their peers, it is going to be difficult for teacher leaders to effect pedagogical change in the classroom. These normative shifts may require the “critical and unsettling rethinking of common and fundamental” norms on the part of the leadership team and the entire school if the teacher leaders are to be engaged in the change process at their school (Oakes, 1992).

Political dimension. In addition to paying attention to the technical and normative dimensions of changes, it is critical for school reformers to address the related political concerns. Oakes describes the relationship between the technical and normative

dimensions as iterative. “Confronting new ideas, examining values, understanding effects all may pave the way for trying a new practice” (Oakes, 1992). Navigating this iterative process can become political by requiring individuals to request or grant permission to change norms, take risks with technical aspects of the school, and redistribute power among individuals. These actions may not always be politically popular with the school community and may require “confronting likely opposition to a system” that is already in place (Oakes, 1992). In the case of teacher leaders in school reform, they are often working in conditions that are politically charged. They are at the forefront of implementing new ideas that challenge existing school norms and are often asked to provide feedback that may present significant risks to existing relationships they have with their peers.

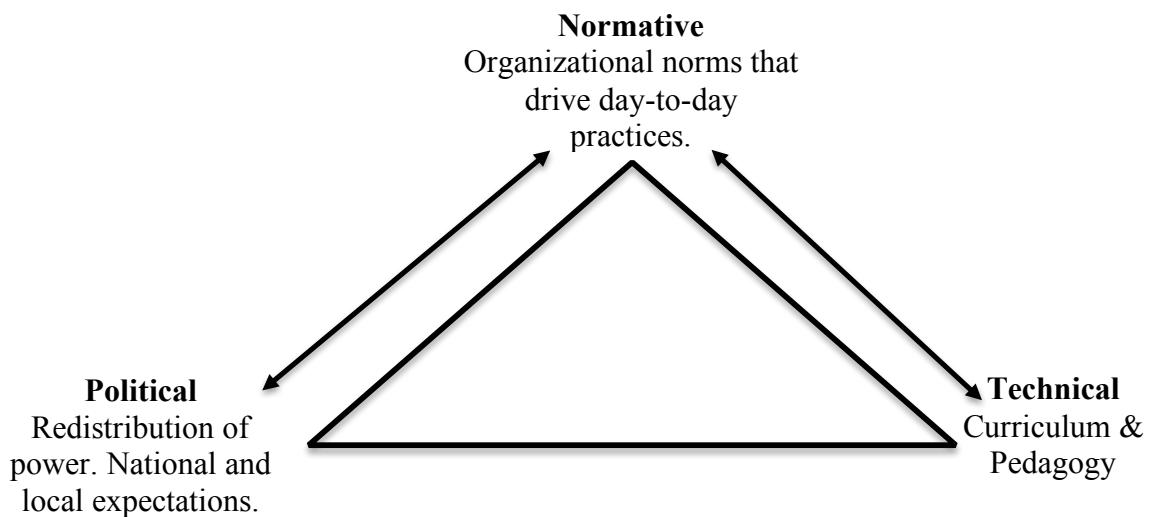


Figure 4. Teacher leaders

The convergence of the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change, the engagement constructs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, and the role of the teacher leader provide a conceptual framework for the innovation of this action research

study. How can L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perception of their ability to engage in the change process at their campus aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?

Change Theory

Concerns-Based Adoption Model

Gene Hall and Shirley Hord's (2001) Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) serves as the underlying change theory supporting Oakes Framework. CBAM focuses on ways to understand what change is about, especially as it relates to the people involved. In the book, *Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles, and Potholes*, Hall and Hord remind us that change is everywhere and "when confronted with change there is a natural tendency to focus on how to defend ourselves from it instead of on how to use and succeed with it" (2001, p. 3). Over the course of four decades, 12 change principles have emerged from the CBAM research. These 12 principles are not mutually exclusive nor do they cover all aspects of change; however, they do address patterns that emerge when organizations and/or individuals engage in the change process. Of these 12 principles, four are examined that may influence the connection between teacher leader engagement and comprehensive school reform. The first principle as it relates to the purpose of this action research project is to recognize that change is a process, not an event (Hall & Hord, 2001). Change treated as an event can have serious consequences for those participating at the ground level of the change. When implementation happens too quickly there can be little time to learn about and come to understand the new way of operating. This causes concern and confusion and can adversely influence the attitude of a participant with respect to embracing the change process.

The second principle that relates to this action research project is that innovations come in different sizes. Hall and Hord (2001) label innovations as either products or processes. Depending on the characteristics of the innovation, the process can be more complicated and take more time. Another important implication of this principle is that “change initiatives are not typically centered around a single innovation but rather a bundle of innovations” (Hall & Hord, p. 8). This principle must be recognized in advance and addressed with the participants involved in the change process. The third principle states that mandates can work. Of utmost importance is the communication of the specifics of an innovation, ongoing training for participants, and adequate time for implementation in the success of a mandated change. Just because an innovation is mandated does not mean that it cannot be successful if implemented as a process rather than an event. Finally, it is important to recognize that the context of the school setting influences the process of change. There are two important dimensions that Hall and Hord highlight in regard to this principle; the physical features of the school and ‘people factors’ of the participants. If the individuals within a school are not ready or willing to change then the process will take longer and require additional support as compared to a school whose individuals are ready.

Engagement Theory

Engagement theory provided a lens through which to view the current and future retention levels of teacher leaders. If we increase the levels of engagement that these talented individuals are experiencing in their roles as teacher leaders, then we may have a chance at preventing them from leaving the position.

Engagement can be an ambiguous idea and is often used synonymously with terms such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workaholism. In reality, engagement is “an independent and distinct concept” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010, p. 1). This definition pertains to any type of “challenging work that requires employees to solve problems, connect with other people, and develop innovative services” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010, p. 2).

It is widely agreed upon that in order to be successful in today’s competitive environment, organizations must not only recruit the top talent but also inspire employees to apply their full capabilities to their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Bakker & Leiter, 2010; Lopez & Sidhu, 2013). Even in the current reform based educational climate, schools and their classrooms are still largely autonomous environments where teachers are expected to “take responsibility for their own professional development and to be committed to high-quality performance standards” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010, p. 1). Schaufeli & Salanova (2007) have discovered that individuals experience higher levels of engagement when there is “social support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, autonomy, and learning opportunities” (p. 2). Social support, like that provided by teacher leaders, holds the “potential for social contagion” in which individuals “respond similarly to their shared work environment and also influence one another’s experience of engagement” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009). Many work situations fail to provide individuals with resources, leadership, and guidance. These critical omissions can prohibit engagement, which reduces the likelihood of accomplishing the organization’s mission (Bakker & Leiter, 2010).

Methods

The primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate how participation in L.E.A.D. groups influenced the self-perceptions that teacher leaders had about their ability to engage in the change process at their schools. A secondary focus of this action research study was to examine if a change in perception could potentially effect the retention rate of the participating teacher leaders. In essence, the researcher attempted to explore how teacher leader perception, L.E.A.D. groups, and retention interacted with one another in comprehensive school reform. This section describes the methods that were used in this action research study. Research methods explored the following research questions:

1. How do teacher leaders perceive themselves as engaged in the change process at their school?
2. How does the use of L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to engage in the change process aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?
3. What are teacher leaders' perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the innovation?

Methodological Approach

Action Research

Throughout this study, action research was used to facilitate the L.E.A.D. groups with teacher leaders. Action research was selected as the most suitable method of research to use in gathering data regarding whether or not the innovation influenced the levels of workplace engagement and perceptions of retention of teacher leaders.

Action research differs from traditional research in three important ways. First, action research does not solely focus on data collection. Instead, it is a cyclical process that has no preconceived right or wrong answer. The cycles of action research build upon one another and are completed in an effort to improve on a challenge area within an organization. Moreover, typically, in action research the researcher is also a practitioner (Bradbury-Huang, 2010). The action researcher values the use of research as a tool to improve problems within the local context. Action researchers also realize that their ability to discuss the results of their research is what gives them a seat at the discussion table. The researcher and the participants change together. They are dependent upon one another to solve a challenge from within to benefit their organization. This process is collaborative and conversational rather than directed and observational. Because the researcher is also a practitioner, they are not removed from the area of concern. They are embedded in the environment and the innovation is relevant to their current practice. Finally, action research can evolve over the course of the study. The researcher is not trying to impose ideas on individuals instead they work together to create an innovation that will be adaptable to help others experiencing the same or a similar challenge.

Research Design

Mixed Methods

In this action research study, an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was used where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. Explanatory sequential mixed methods is a two-phase method in which quantitative data is collected in the first phase, results are analyzed, and then used to guide the qualitative phase of research (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative data for this study was collected in

the form of two vetted engagement surveys; the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Gallup Q12 Engagement Survey. A larger survey combining these two surveys was administered in October at the beginning of the study and then again in January at the conclusion of the study. Phase two of this design included the use of the analyzed quantitative data as a foundation to create the qualitative inquiry. Qualitative collection included L.E.A.D. groups, participant reflections, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observational field notes. Inductive analysis methods were used to analyze qualitative data. The analysis was informed by the literature of this study; the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change as well as the engagement constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness became integral themes throughout the analysis.

Quantitative Research

Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) explain the quantitative approach to research as one in which the

researcher studies a problem that calls for an explanation; decides what to study; asks specific, narrow questions; collects quantifiable data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics. (p. 66)

The inclusion of this approach in this research project allowed me to study and explain the phenomenon of teacher leaders in school reform in an “unbiased and objective manner” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 66). Through the questions from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Gallup Q12 Engagement Survey, I measured the current levels of workplace engagement of participating teacher leaders and searched for a “description of trends” in the teacher leader population (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 66). Through this quantitative approach, I was able to plan for the

innovation portion of this study and collect results that allowed me to compare with predictions and past iterations of this study.

Qualitative Research

Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) explain the qualitative approach to research as one in which the:

Researcher studies a problem that calls for an explanation; relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting of largely words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective and reflexive manner (p. 66).

The inclusion of this approach in this research project allowed me to study and explain the phenomenon of teacher leaders in school reform. Through the L.E.A.D. groups, I relied on the views of the teacher leaders themselves to describe their perceptions of the effectiveness of the action to influence their ability to engage in the change process. I used their words and text to analyze their perception of engagement in their position through the context of the innovation topics. This qualitative approach allowed me to consider the “larger meaning of the personal reflections about the findings” to support the Dove School District in future actions pertaining to the conditions surrounding teacher leaders in their schools (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 66).

Qualitative data collection included L.E.A.D. groups, participant reflections, focus group discussions, and observational field notes.

Phenomenology. Edmund Husserl’s (1931) definition of phenomenology focuses on the lived experience; “first person subjective life” as a method of describing “consciousness as the constitutive presupposition for experiencing any world whatsoever.” This line of inquiry is grounded in the principle that “reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood.” Based on the focus of this study,

to investigate how teacher leaders perceive their ability to engage in the change process, Husserl's phenomenology was identified as the most appropriate approach for this study. Furthermore, Creswell's outline of the major procedural steps for a phenomenological study match the research design for this study (2007). The identified problem was one in which it was "important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences in order to develop practices or policies" for future reform efforts. The data was collected through "in-depth interviews and multiple meetings" with participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Polkinghorne (1995) recommended a sample of between five to twenty-five individuals "who have all experienced the same phenomenon" for an effective phenomenological study. My sample included six teacher leaders who had all participated in the same comprehensive school reform effort in one school district in Arizona. In terms of artifacts, audiotaped conversations and written documentation regarding the teacher leaders' "accounts of experiences" with the L.E.A.D. groups were also collected (van Manen, 1990). Throughout the innovation utilized in this study, teacher leaders were asked to reflect on each L.E.A.D. group topic using the following questions, *were you able to exercise (insert innovation title) since we last met? If so, what did you notice as you engaged in this action? Are you likely to continue this action? Why or Why not?* These questions were modifications of the following broad, general questions suggested by Moustakas (1994) aimed at "providing an understanding of the common experiences of the participants, *what have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experience of the phenomenon?*" This design supported my study of the phenomenon of the teacher leader in school reform, as I attempted to describe what the "participants had

in common” with regards to their perceptions of their experiences, and worked to leave my audience with the feeling, “*I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that*” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58, Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 46).

Setting

In 2010, the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College of Arizona State University (ASU) was awarded \$43.8 million in Teacher Incentive Fund dollars. The funding was awarded to the Arizona Ready-for-Rigor Project (AZRfR) and included 60 individual schools in 12 school districts across the state of Arizona (Hegarty, 2012). This study took place in one of the twelve school districts supported by the AZRfR.

The Dove School District was situated in the southwest region of Phoenix, supporting nearly 6,000 students in nine schools; seven kindergarten through eighth grade schools, one alternative school, and one fourth through eighth grade school. At the time, they had a total of 18 teacher leaders. The socio-economic status of the district, most often determined by the percentage of students qualifying for free and/or reduced lunch, is outlined below in Table 4 and ranged from as low as 27% to as high as 45%. The academic achievement of the schools, most often determined by the state letter grade, is also outlined in Table 4 and ranged from as high as a B to as low as an F.

Table 4

Socioeconomic and Achievement Status of Dove School District

School	Percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch program	2014 School Letter Grade
School A	45%	C
School B	40%	C
School C	27%	B
School D	32%	C
School E	27%	B
School F	45%	C
School G	45%	F
School H	43%	B
School I	35%	B

Participants and Sampling

In this study purposeful, homogenous sampling was used to select the participants. Purposeful sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where “researchers intentionally select sites and individuals to learn about” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 253). I intentionally selected teacher leaders, specifically master teachers as defined in section titled Retention, who participated in the TAP System in the Dove School District because of their retention data as well as my access to their sites. At the end of the 2014-15 school year, five of the eighteen teacher leaders indicated that they would not be returning to the teacher leader role for the 2015-16 school year. In my role as a Regional Master Teacher Leader with Arizona State University, I worked

with the Dove School District on the implementation of the TAP System for five consecutive years, including the year that this study was completed. I had the access and relationships necessary to conduct this study with the identified participants. Researchers use homogenous sampling when they want “to describe a subgroup of individuals in depth” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 254). Since the role of the teacher leader was a result of decades of school reform, utilizing this sampling strategy allowed me to study the experiences of these teacher leaders in this structure of school reform at a deeper level and “give voice” to their stories (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 253). In addition, past iterations of action research had shown that this group was struggling under the conditions of school reform, and I was interested in exploring the contributing factors.

Recruitment

The Superintendent’s Office of the Dove School District provided permission to conduct the study in September 2015, and an informational session was held with all teacher leaders in October 2015. At this session, the participant expectations were communicated, as well as a flexible timeline for completion of the L.E.A.D. groups. Following the informational session, there were six teacher leaders who both met the sampling criteria and were willing to make the time commitment outlined in the research plan. Five of the participants worked in the kindergarten through eighth grade setting with one of the participants representing the fourth through eighth grade setting. These individuals completed the required consent forms indicating their interest in serving as a participant in the study and were informed of the upcoming on-line survey. Table 5 provides a complete look of the demographic information about each teacher leader.

Table 5

Teacher Leader Demographic Information

Identifier	Gender	Education level	Years as a teacher	Years as a teacher leader	Highly qualified per NCLB	Nationally Board Certified	School level
Janet	Female	Master's Degree Educational Leadership	15-19	1-4	No	Yes	K-8
Sarah	Female	Master's Degree Educational Leadership	15-19	10-14	Yes Elementary Education and Special Education	Yes	K-8
Lindsay	Female	Master's Degree Elementary Education	15-19	5-9	No	Yes	K-8
Kate	Female	Master's Degree Curriculum & Instruction	5-9	5-9	Yes Reading	No	K-8
Lily	Female	Master's Degree Educational Leadership	10-14	5-9	Yes Mathematics	No	K-8
Tammy	Female	Master's Degree Educational Leadership	10-14	10-14	Yes Elementary Education	No	4-8

Procedures

To determine answers to the research questions guiding this study, I used five mixed-methods data collection tools. The following section provides a description of each of the collection tools, how they supported this study, and an implementation timeline.

The innovation implemented to address the research questions for this study took place over an 11-week period beginning in October 2015 and running through December 2015. The innovation was bundled into three key actions and facilitated by myself as the

researcher. I traveled to each school site to meet with the teacher leaders either individually (two participants) or in a small group (four participants). Each teacher leader participated in three face-to-face L.E.A.D. groups with running times ranging from 30 to 90 minutes. Each L.E.A.D. group began with a structured participant reflection then provided the teacher leaders with new learning on a topic of engagement, and concluded with a commitment to action. There was a final focus group at the conclusion of the study.

Measures

The following measures were used to provide data and evidence for the innovation.

Measure 1: Pre and Post Innovation Survey

The Dove School District began classes with students in August 2015. After the start of the school year, I began communication with the Superintendent's Office regarding my interest in conducting this study with their teacher leaders and received positive confirmation in September 2015. To explore the first research question: *How do teacher leaders perceive themselves as engaged in the change process at their school?*, participants were asked to complete a survey at the beginning and end of the innovation. This measure also helped to address the third question: *What are the teacher leaders' perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the innovation?*

The survey was administered to the teacher leaders prior to our first L.E.A.D. group, and again after the final focus group.

The survey was comprised of 29 Likert-scale items that were organized around the construct of workplace engagement. A sample Likert-scale item for the

construct of engagement was, *At work, I have the opportunity to do what do best every day. Choose: 0 = Never to 6 = Always*. The survey had an additional three Likert-scale items that were organized around the constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A sample Likert-scale item for these constructs was, *Please rate your current level of purpose. Choose 0 = No Purpose to 5 = Complete Purpose*. Participants were instructed to select the most appropriate number to represent their perceptions at that moment. The survey was created and conducted in Google forms and participants were provided with a link via e-mail in October and January.

Measure 2: Focus Groups

A focus group is the process of “collecting data through interviews with a small group of people” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 258). Focus groups allow the researcher to ask broad, general questions and observe the interaction among the participants. I incorporated focus groups into this action research study for two main reasons. The first was that this format was the most appropriate forum to inform participants about the purpose and vision of the study. The structure supported me in garnering interest for further participation in the innovation. The initial focus group was conducted in October 2015 and resulted in the successful recruitment of six participants. The final focus group was conducted in January 2016 and focused on pre-planned questions that addressed the experiences of the participants as well as ideas central to their perceptions of retention.

Measure 3: Participant Reflections

Participants reflected at the beginning of each L.E.A.D. group. They verbally responded to the prompts, *were you able to exercise (Find the Meaning, Who Am I, and I*

Can Do This) since we last met? If so, what did you notice as you engaged in this action?

Are you likely to continue this action? Why or Why not? Teacher leaders were

encouraged to share any information that they felt was relevant for me to truly understand their ability to complete the agreed upon action and their opinion of the effectiveness of the action to influence their perception of their ability to engage in the change process at their school. The reflections were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed using inductive coding techniques (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Saldana, 2013).

Measure 4: Observational Field Notes

Observation is the process of “gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 261). In a mixed methods study, it is appropriate for the researcher to capture information about the setting, the participants, and their behaviors. It is also appropriate for the researcher to capture personal actions, thoughts, and decisions. In this study, I served in the changing observational role (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). The design of the changing observational role allowed me to serve as both a participant and a nonparticipant. My hopes were that I would begin the study in the role of participant observer and as the teacher leaders began to take ownership of the innovation, I would transition into the role of a nonparticipant observer. This process occurred to an extent. As the researcher, I continued to initiate the topic of the L.E.A.D. groups and reflection questions throughout the course of the innovation; however, there was a measurable difference in the flow of the conversations that took place throughout the sessions. By the second and third sessions, the teacher leaders were paraphrasing what others were saying, asking clarifying questions, and at some times even disagreeing with one another. This structure

allowed me to see the innovation “subjectively as well as objectively” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 262). It also provided the best opportunity for the innovation to be sustainable after the conclusion of this study.

I took extensive field notes throughout and immediately after each L.E.A.D. group. These notes were captured in written form and were labeled with the “date, time, and place” of the innovation (Mack, Woodsong, McQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, p. 24). The L.E.A.D. groups were also audiotaped so the field notes could be used strategically to capture “key words and phrases” that then triggered my memory later as I expanded on my notes (Mack et al., 2005, p. 24). The field notes focused on the teacher leaders’ behaviors, moods, and body language throughout the meetings. I took note of when a participant got excited as well as if they seemed to be genuinely interested in the conversation. I also kept field notes regarding my personal interactions with the teacher leaders and my thoughts on the innovations as they unfolded. In order to ensure that my field notes were as descriptive and detailed as possible, immediately following the L.E.A.D. groups, I expanded upon my key words and phrases.

Measure 5: Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are opportunities for researchers to ask “open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their unconstrained responses” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 257). Plano Clark & Creswell (2010) describe a number of reasons why researchers would incorporate interviews into their study. They are:

- Researchers can gather information that is otherwise not observed.
- Participants can share more detailed personal information.

- Researcher can seek specific information by carefully crafting questions (p. 257).

Interviews supported this phenomenological study and allowed me to ask questions and record answers from one person at a time (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). I interviewed all of the participating teacher leaders. This process aided in the development of a “composite description of the experience for all of the individuals” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).

The semi-structured interviews with the teacher leaders ran simultaneously to the L.E.A.D. groups. Questions for the semi-structured interviews were pre-planned as well as individually based on an observation from the L.E.A.D. group or a unique story that had been shared during a participant reflection. This was an organic process that supported the data collected in the innovation. The interviews allowed me to dig deeper into the teacher leaders’ individual experience, environment, and perception of engagement.

Calculating for school holidays, the overall timeline for this study was approximately 11 weeks. Table 6 provides a comprehensive look at the five data collection tools that were used throughout this study.

Table 6

Data Collection Measures and Timelines

Instrument	Description and/or Purpose	Timeline
UWES and Gallup Q12 Engagement Surveys Appendix A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measured current levels of workplace engagement of participating teacher leaders. Created a description of trends in the teacher leader population. Narrowed the purpose of the study and collected data to compare with predictions and past iterations of this study. 	October 2015 January 2016
Focus Groups Appendix B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathered a shared understanding from a group. Reflections on experiences over the course of the innovation. Explored ideas central to retention. 	October 2015 January 2016
Participant Reflections Appendix C	Personal reflection focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The experience of participating in the innovation. The likelihood that the innovation would be sustained. 	Weeks of October 30, 2015 November 16, 2015 December 14, 2015 January 5, 2016
Observational Field Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moods, behaviors, and attitudes of teacher leaders. Key words and phrases that stood out as ideas to explore further. Researchers interaction with participants. 	Throughout Study
Semi-Structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted with all teacher leaders. Guided by an event or reflection observed or read by the researcher. Focused on engagement levels and technical, normative, and political dimensions of change. 	Throughout Study
Innovation L.E.A.D. Groups Learn. Engage. Act. Discuss.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation Provided the participating teacher leaders a space to discuss their roles in the change process at their school, their engagement in the reform processes, and their ability to navigate the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change. 	Weeks of October 30, 2015 November 16, 2015 December 14, 2015

Innovation: L.E.A.D. (Learn, Engage, Act, Discuss.) Groups

To understand how teacher leaders perceived their engagement in the change process at their school, I developed, implemented, and studied an innovation that included a series of three action-driven sessions. The purpose of the L.E.A.D. sessions

was to provide the participating teacher leaders a space to discuss their roles in the change process at their school, their perceived engagement in those processes, and their perceived ability to navigate the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change. The L.E.A.D. sessions were held monthly with the participating teacher leaders. At each session I collected ongoing qualitative data documenting the participant reflections as well as my observations during the session to answer the second research question: *How does the use of L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to engage in the change process aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?*

I began conducting these sessions the week of October 30, 2015 and concluded the week of December 14, 2015 for a total of three face-to-face meetings with all participants. As the researcher, I facilitated the face-to-face meetings. Each meeting began with a reflective discussion of the teacher leaders' experiences with the innovation over the past month and concluded with a commitment to action for the upcoming month. Table 7 provides a complete timeline for the implementation of the L.E.A.D. groups.

Table 7

Innovation Timeline for Implementation

Innovation	Week of L.E.A.D. session
#1 – Find the Meaning!	10.30.2015
#2 – Who Am I ?	11.16.2015
#3 – I Can Do This.	12.14.2015

Data Analysis

I conducted the data analysis process in two phases. The first phase included listening to the audio recordings of the participant reflections, L.E.A.D. group sessions, and semi-structured interviews. All interactions were transcribed and time stamped. Each transcription was read in its entirety which allowed me to reacquaint myself with the participant experiences and actions. I then conducted three thorough readings of the transcriptions. The first reading focused on the following themes; technical, normative, political, autonomy, competency, and relatedness; all important terms associated with the literature supporting this study. This form of coding was appropriate because these were specific topics of interest that I wanted to be sure to use as codes (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). The second reading focused on the teacher leaders' perceptions of their level of engagement, and required me to reread the transcripts and highlight significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provided an understanding of how participants experienced the innovation (Moustakas, 1994). In alignment with the phenomenological data analysis, the third reading consisted of developing "clusters of meaning from the significant statements" into themes (Moustakas, 1994). The themes were then used to create textural descriptions, or descriptions of what the participants experienced

(Creswell, 2007). These descriptions then became the foundation for findings that focus on the common experiences of the participating teacher leaders. Throughout this process, I analyzed my data by hand, using color-coded highlighting and bracketing (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 280).

Validity

McMillian and Schumacher (2006) define validity as the “degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world” (p. 324). Validity is critical in qualitative action research to address whether or not the researcher actually observed and heard what they thought they did (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006). In order to ensure validity and trustworthiness of the results found in this study, I employed two strategies. They were participant researcher and member checking (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006).

Participant researcher. Participant research involves the “use of participant recorded perceptions” (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006, p. 325). I asked the participating teacher leaders to reflect on their actions from the previous action at the beginning of each engagement group. These reflections served as a record for corroboration of my findings at the conclusion of the study.

Member checking. Member checking is the process of “informally checking with participants for accuracy” (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006, p. 325). This validation process took place frequently throughout my study as well as collectively at the end of my study. Teacher leaders had the opportunity to agree or disagree with my findings in order to ensure an accurate portrayal of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). By using

these qualitative validity methods, I was able to ensure that my results were trustworthy and presented as accurately as possible.

Results

The innovation in this study was aimed at empowering teacher leaders to take responsibility for their engagement in the change processes at their school. The innovation provided a space for teacher leaders to *L.E.A.D.* or *learn* about an *engagement* strategy, *act* on that new learning, and *discuss* how those actions influenced their perceived ability to navigate the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change in their role. The greater purpose behind the design of this innovation was to provide teacher leaders with tools they could utilize that would support them in the realization that their level of engagement was not totally dependent on those around them. In fact, as Bakker and Leiter (2010) stated, engagement is a personal concept especially as it pertains to work that includes problem-solving, connecting with people, and innovative thinking, as the teacher leader role was designed to do. The assumptions behind these sessions were that knowledge of these concepts and use of these tools would promote participants' longevity as teacher leaders and allow the system to retain them for longer periods of time and at higher rates.

This study tells the stories of six teacher leaders that participated in 11 weeks of action research on engagement. Throughout the study, I will discuss the quantitative data utilized to plan for the *L.E.A.D.* groups, provide a brief description of the actions taken by the participating teacher leaders, and discuss the findings related to the following research questions:

1. How do teacher leaders perceive themselves as engaged in the change process at their school?
2. How does the use of L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to engage in the change process aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?
3. What are the teacher leaders' perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the innovation?

In addition to answering the research questions, this section provides evidence in support of proving the overarching assertion in this study; *without intentional training for schools in the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change, teacher leaders will often be mis-utilized and struggle to perceive themselves as fully engaged in their work of supporting teachers in comprehensive school reform.*

Findings: Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, How do teacher leaders perceive themselves as engaged in the change process at their school? To examine the first research question of this study, data from the pre/post survey responses, transcripts from the initial and final focus groups, and the semi-structured interviews were analyzed. The data were analyzed, categorized, and presented through the dimensions of change that served as a theoretical foundation for this study and resulted in the following key findings.

1. *Teacher leaders believed their primary role in the change process at their school is to support teachers in the improvement of instructional practices, but their perception is that they spend the majority of their time engaged in “utility work.”*

2. *Teacher leaders believed a key component of their role in the change process at their school is to support teachers' professional growth by providing new learning opportunities and constructive feedback;* however, their perception is that they rarely receive this type of professional growth for themselves. This lack of professional growth was perceived as inhibiting their ability to fully engage in the change process through new ideas.

3. *Teacher leaders perceive that their ability to engage in the change process at their school is dependent on a number of factors that are outside of their control,* namely the planning and organization of others that determine their effectiveness, calendar, and types of responsibilities assigned to them.

These three findings supported the assertion that *without intentional training for schools in the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change, teacher leaders will often be mis-utilized and struggle to perceive themselves as fully engaged in their work of supporting teachers in comprehensive school reform.* The following section describes how the teacher leaders in this study interacted with the dimensions of change.

Oakes' Framework for Change

Oakes' (1992) framework for change including the technical, normative, and political dimensions provided a foundation for the discussion around what is happening to these particular teacher leaders and their perceptions of their engagement in the change process at their school. All three overlapping dimensions shaped the use (or misuse) of teacher leaders in the change process in this study and resulted in consequences that are shared in the sections that follow.

Technical dimension. The teacher leader, as defined by the TAP System, was a new “technical strategy” for the Dove School District. The concept of a teacher leader as someone who was a former classroom teacher and was responsible for supporting others by providing feedback and securing resources was already in place. However, the added components of being a decision-making member of the leadership team, a formal evaluator, and a site-based professional developer, challenged the norm that teacher leaders were not members of the administration, but rather peers and confidants to the teachers. While these additional technical components may have been addressed in initial discussions and trainings, there was actually very little guidance on how to address the potential conflict with historically rooted practices at the school sites. As Oakes stated, “when a change is fundamentally different, it clashes with other practices. The new practice typically changes to fit the school rather than the school adjusting to fit the new practice” (1992, p. 17). The added components of leadership team membership, evaluative powers, and professional development responsibilities was most definitely a fundamental change in the Dove School District. Rather than the schools adjusting to this new practice, my analysis of the teacher leaders’ perceptions demonstrates that more often than not, the new practice changed to fit the existing organization of the school. Tammy highlights this lack of adjustment below when discussing her perception of her ability to guide the content of the professional development on her campus,

We talk about doing what’s best for kids but then I am not allowed to help people solve their problems in a way that I really believe is best for teachers and students. We (referring to the leadership team) get very officious about the curriculum we’ve adopted and following it step-by-step and day-by-day. So, even if I can prove that there are aspects of that curriculum that aren’t necessary and are actually impeding students learning, it doesn’t matter. We are doing it anyway.

It was evident from this quote that Tammy's school had not adjusted to the new technical strategy of allowing her, a highly trained teacher leader, to be in charge of the professional development. Instead, they were reverting back to a widely held norm that the curriculum developers knew best and they were to stay the course with regards to teaching that curriculum. Sarah described her membership on the leadership team in the following way,

So many things are just out of my control and they are big things. We go to the meetings and listen to the conversations but our opinions don't really seem to matter. Changes that are taking place in terms of the bigger picture of our school. . . . I can't effect in this role so I get frustrated with that. I see myself having to go into administration in order to effect those changes.

This statement showcases that while a leadership team structure was developed as part of implementation of the TAP System, the tenants of distributed leadership are not actually being followed.

Normative dimension. The normative dimension of Oakes' framework is grounded in the idea that "schools must be committed to reform and the alternative practices must make sense to them or the change will not occur" (1992, p. 18). Without this commitment, it is unlikely that the change will occur in a sustainable way. The teacher leaders in this study were a position of reform and perceived themselves to be spending the majority of their time engaged in utility work or focusing on factors that were different from what they had planned for their day and largely outside of their control. This demonstrates that their newly defined responsibilities conflicted with "deeply ingrained organizational norms that consciously and unconsciously drove the day-to-day educational practices" at the schools (Oakes, 1992, p. 18). This is heard in the following statements describing the rift between what the teacher leaders' stated was their

purpose in the change process at their school and what they actually perceived themselves as doing on a day to day basis to engage in that process.

Kate described that her purpose as a teacher leader was to “inspire and support teachers through helping them believe that they can improve their practice.” The explanation below is her perception of her true day-to-day activities,

Well, what I am actually asked to do on a day-to-day basis is live out a series of routines. I go through the motions. I listen to a lot of crying and complaining. I look at data with teachers but it’s just numbers. I think we have all forgotten that it’s not just about the numbers; it’s about kids lives. Right now my assigned purpose is to improve test scores.

Sarah echoed this sentiment and shared that her purpose as a teacher leader was to, “remove obstacles that were preventing teachers from being their best and preventing students from learning.” When asked if she felt like that was what she did on a daily basis, she responded, “no, what I actually do on a daily basis is go through the motions that are required. I check off the checklist, help put out fires, and go to meetings” (personal communication, October 2015). Simply put, Janet shared that her purpose as a teacher leader was to “do whatever it takes to support teachers;” however, what she was often required to do was cover classrooms at the last minute and take on positions that were unfilled (personal communication, October 2015).

When discussing the factors that prevented them from completing their planned actions on a given day, the teacher leaders’ responses depicted school structures that had “remained impervious to the reform” that was the teacher leader position (Oakes, 1992, p. 12). For example, at our first L.E.A.D. meeting, Sarah shared (laughing) that she had “just wiped tables in the lunch room for an hour and then swept the floors.” While this was shared in a humorous manner, it led to deeper discussion that revealed that many of

the teacher leaders' felt as though they were assigned to tasks based on convenience rather than because of the individual skill sets they were "supposedly hired to use" (personal communication, October 2015). Janet shared the following example to make this point,

I can see the purpose in having us cover classrooms, I really can. Like, if they wanted to take one teacher to see another teacher deliver a lesson but they don't use us for that. Usually it is last minute and it is either because someone is sick or the administration needs to see the teacher. I feel like I am just an on-site baby-sitter. At least put me into a classroom where I can add something to the kids, like the first grade. I am highly qualified in early childhood education. What good am I in seventh grade math?

Tammy discussed the idea that her day is "unpredictable" due to lack of planning or organization by others at her site.

I feel like I am pulled to take care of a lot of random things that take a lot of time. I will do it but those are not the skill sets that I was hired to use. Usually the emergencies of others interrupt what I had planned to do to with my day. Does that make sense? Like, today I was called (twice) to walk this eighth grader to the bathroom because he cannot be trusted to make that walk by himself. I went and got him, waited for him, and then walked him back. I mean come on, really? I wonder how much that comes down to on a per hour salary?

Lily shared that she believes since they do not have classroom responsibilities they are "used at the last minute all the time."

I think it is a mismanagement of time that makes us have to rush and complete things. They (referring to her district office) always wait until the last minute to assign us tasks and then we have to rush to create a product. Like, if this work is so vital and we are giving them wonderful information, then we should have longer to work on it, not just be called out of our schools at the last minute and have to stay until it is done.

In order to further support these statements, the quantitative data collected through both the UWES and Gallup Q12 engagement surveys were examined. Two statements were analyzed to further support the perceived disconnect between the self-

stated purpose of the teacher leader and their perceived ability to engage in the change process at their school. These statements are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

Participant Responses Pertaining to Research Question 1

UWES: 0 = Never, 6 = Always	Janet	Sarah	Lindsay	Kate	Lily	Tammy	Group average
UWES 2: I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	2	3	5	2	3	3	3
Q12: 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree	Janet	Sarah	Lindsay	Kate	Lily	Tammy	Group average
Gallup Q12 3: At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	2	2	3	4	3	3	2.8

Five of the teacher leaders reported neutral to high levels of disagreement for UWES statement 2, *I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose*, with only one individual reporting a high level of agreement for the statement. These responses showcase that while the participating teacher leaders clearly articulated that their purpose as a teacher leader was to support teachers, they struggled to find meaning and purpose in their actual assigned day-to-day responsibilities. Furthermore, the Gallup Q12 statement analyzed asked about the teacher leaders' ability to, "*do what I do best every day.*" This statement again resulted in high levels of disagreement from the participants. Five individuals reported either feeling neutral or disagreement with the statement with only one teacher leader reporting agreement. These quantitative responses parallel the qualitative stories shared by the teacher leaders to indicate that while they believe their primary role in the change process is to support teachers, their perception is that they

spend the majority of their time engaged in “utility work” and are assigned tasks out of convenience for others rather than based on their individual skill sets.

Political dimension. Oakes describes the technical and normative dimensions of change as iterative, interacting with one another in a cyclical manner within the school environment. This cyclical nature is highlighted through the use (or misuse) of the teacher leaders in this study. Building on the idea that change is a process not an event, by Hall and Hord (2001), the consequences of implementing changes too quickly seems to have directly impacted the teacher leaders. The organization of people and structural change (technical dimension) was not solid in these sites resulting in the day to day actions of the teacher leaders not being protected (normative dimension). This lack of protected time led to the teacher leaders not being utilized appropriately (technical dimension). Due to a lack of upfront training on these dimensions, the cycle of misuse was perpetuated and new way of operating was never truly adopted.

While teacher leaders and schools are living in this cycle they are also navigating the political struggles which often “extend beyond the school itself” (Oakes, 1992, p. 17). In the past couple of years, politicians and educational opinion leaders have focused on defining teacher leadership slightly differently. One example is the Teach to Lead Initiative put forward by the United States Department of Education. In his speech to the National Board on Professional Teaching Standards, then Secretary of Education, Arnie Duncan, discussed the need for teachers “to have a voice in what happens in their schools and their profession without leaving the classroom” (Duncan, 2014). Duncan further encouraged schools, districts, and states to “provide more opportunities for genuine,

authentic teacher leadership that don't require giving up a daily role in the classroom" (2014).

Another example is the Teacher Leadership Initiative (TLI). Barnett Berry, CEO of the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) shared the following when discussing the TLI, a partnership with the National Education Association (NEA),

The long-term goals of TLI are to define the foundational competencies of teacher leadership; develop relevant experiences and support to help teachers cultivate those competencies, and activate teachers to be leaders for their profession. It's time to blur the lines of distinction between those who teach in schools and those who lead them (2014).

While this study does not take a personal stance on the merit of the above mentioned initiatives, I do intend to show that the entire concept of the teacher leader, defined as someone who is provided with classroom release time to conduct field-testing, plan and deliver professional development, and support individual teachers is highly political. In an era when educational reform is a political topic from the national to state to local levels and "all schools need political support – not only for funding and physical resources but also for credibility" the individuals in this study were in a very vulnerable position (Oakes, 1992, p. 19). The perception that these teacher leaders were often misutilized due to a lack of training for schools in the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change is a condition outside of their control that has resulted in "serious consequences for those on the ground" (Hall & Hord, 2001, p. 42).

Findings: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *How does the use of L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to engage in the change process aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?* To examine the second research question of this study,

data from a number of sources were analyzed, including teacher leader responses to the post survey, participant reflections, transcripts from the L.E.A.D. groups, and semi-structured interviews. The analysis was informed by the literature of this study; and the constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness became integral to the development and implementation of the innovation. Through the use of line-by-line readings and open-coding techniques, it was the teacher leaders' voices that ultimately led to the following key findings:

1. By investing a small amount of time in personal and genuine reflection, teacher leaders perceived an increased sense of engagement, relatedness, and purpose in the change process at their school.

2. By identifying and exercising professional strength areas in new ways and receiving targeted feedback, teacher leaders perceived an increased sense of engagement, competence, and productivity in the change process at their school.

3. By creating and defining short-term attainable professional goals for themselves, teacher leaders perceived an increased sense of engagement, autonomy, and accomplishment.

These three findings support the assertion that *the creation of a counter space to the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change allows teacher leaders to redefine their actions and engage more fully with their role in the change process at their schools*. The following section provides a description of the actions taken by the participating teacher leaders and a glimpse into the positive changes that took place in their perceptions of their ability to engage with the change process as a result of participating in the L.E.A.D. groups.

L.E.A.D. Groups

L.E.A.D. Group #1

Find the meaning. In order to address how the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to (or lack of ability to) engage in the change process at their school was influenced by participation in the L.E.A.D. groups, I focused the first L.E.A.D. group on the topic of relatedness and purpose. We titled the innovation, *Find the Meaning*. This innovation was aimed at providing the teacher leaders with a tool that they could use to connect their day-to-day actions with their personal purpose thereby increasing their perceived engagement. Participants were asked to identify a task(s) that they were often required to complete that took a significant amount and they defined as "utility work." From there, they engaged in a process of self-questioning utilizing the following:

- What is the intended purpose of this task? or What will this task accomplish?
- How can I align the assigned task with my personal purpose? or How can I find my personal purpose in this task?
- What adjustments am I empowered to make, if any, that will help me connect to my personal purpose? or Is there a way I can do this task differently so that it will align to my personal purpose?

At the conclusion of the L.E.A.D. group, the teacher leaders committed to utilizing this self-questioning process over the course of the next month as a way to consciously connect their personal purpose to assigned tasks that consumed considerable amounts of time and felt like "utility work" (Achor, 2010). Table 9 provides a summary of the tasks that the teacher leaders identified as utility work.

Table 9

Find the Meaning Tasks and Experiences

Identifier	Identified task: “Utility Work”	Change in perceptions as a result of innovation	Continue to implement innovation after study? Y/N
Janet	Act as a substitute in a classroom.	“My attitude was better.” “I was happy.”	Y
Sarah	Attend a district led meeting.	“I was able to find humor in the fact that I was still at work.”	Y
Lindsay	Act as a substitute in a classroom.	“I was able to deal with it.”	Y
Kate	Development of pacing guide for English Language Development (ELD) teachers.	“Less bitter.” “I was less inclined to fight the process.”	Y
Lily	Observing the implementation of a STEM program at a neighboring school.	“I got excited.” “I asked more thoughtful questions.”	Y
Tammy	Taking photos of students for school-wide project.	“I still felt like I just had to deal with it and get it done.”	N

Reflections. Participant reflections on the *Find the Meaning* innovation revealed that 100% of the teacher leaders reported engaging in the self-questioning process between the weeks of October 30, 2015 to November 16, 2015. Each participant was asked to reflect on how the innovation supported their perceived level of engagement. The following responses support one of the key findings stated in the introduction of this section; *By investing a small amount of time in personal and genuine reflection, teacher leaders perceived an increased sense of engagement, relatedness, and purpose in the change process at their school.*

When describing the task of attending a “poorly planned district meeting” that was focused on the development of a curriculum pacing guide she would not be using,

Kate stated “she felt less bitter and was less inclined to fight the process” after utilizing the self-questioning technique. Lily utilized the reflection process while observing the use of a scripted STEM curriculum at a neighboring school. At first she was frustrated and discouraged because she believed that her district would never spend the money to purchase this program. She initially saw the process as a waste of her time. After utilizing the innovation, she realized that there were elements of what the teachers were doing that didn’t require the purchase of the program. This realization led her to “get excited and ask more thoughtful questions” because she was now able to align the assigned task to her personal purpose. Janet reflected on serving as a substitute in a classroom at her campus. At first, she was angry because this type of request takes place frequently on her campus and often at the last minute. She shared that she “took a step back, a deep breath, and asked herself the questions she had learned in the L.E.A.D. group.” At the conclusion of this process, she stated that her “attitude was better and overall she felt happier.” These quotes demonstrate that when teacher leaders can “connect every small thing they do to the larger picture, they are more engaged and find more purpose in their actions” (Achor, 2010, p. 80). Table 9 provides additional quotes from each participant that detail their experience with the innovation.

At the conclusion of the study, I revisited the idea of relatedness and purpose with the teacher leaders and asked them to explain how *Find the Meaning* influenced their perception of their ability to engage in the change process at their school directly addressing the second research question in this study. Sarah described her experience with the L.E.A.D. group in the following way, “it made me more conscious of the importance of finding meaning in my work. It caused me to have a more positive outlook

by focusing on more than how my work impacts me personally.” Lily shared that after practicing what she learned in the L.E.A.D. group she is now better able to let things “roll off her back” and has “made a commitment to herself to reflect on this structure a couple of times a week.” When asked if they would continue this action after the study was complete, five of the six or 83% of participants reported yes.

L.E.A.D. Group #2

Who Am I? In order to address how the teacher leaders’ perceptions of their ability to (or lack of ability to) engage in the change process at their school was influenced by participation in the L.E.A.D. groups, I focused the second L.E.A.D. group on the topic of competence and feedback. These topics were identified in response to the following information gathered from the participants through the Gallup Q12 engagement survey used in this study. Table 10 provides the survey statement and initial participant responses for the concepts of competence and feedback.

Table 10

Summary of Participant Responses to Questions on Competence and Feedback

Q12: 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree	Janet	Sarah	Lindsay	Kate	Lily	Tammy	Group average
Q12 4: In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	5	2	5	3	1	2	3
Q12 6:In the last six months, someone at work has spoken to me about my progress as a teacher leader.	1	1	5	1	1	1	1.7
Q12 13:Someone at work encourages my development.	4	4	3	4	3	1	3.2

The Q12 statements that supported the focus of competence and feedback addressed the idea of receiving recognition, encouragement, or feedback on their progress and development as a teacher leader. When questioned about receiving praise or recognition, one participant strongly disagreed, two disagreed, and one reported feeling neutral. The remaining two participants reported strongly agreeing with the statement. The results for the statement, *Someone at work encourages my development*, were slightly more positive with three of the teacher leaders reporting that they agreed with the statement, two of the individuals reported feeling neutral about the statement and the remaining participant strongly disagreeing. Most alarming in this section of the responses was the statement, *In the last six months, someone at work has spoken to me about my progress as a teacher leader*. Five of the six participants reported strong disagreement with this statement. The remaining teacher leader reporting strong agreement with the statement.

These data showcased that a key component of what the literature addresses with regards to engagement was missing for the majority of these individuals. As Schaufeli & Salanova (2007) discussed, individuals experience higher levels of engagement when there is “social support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, and learning opportunities” (p. 2). Social support, like that provided to teachers by teacher leaders, was not supplied to them in return. This lack of professional growth was perceived as inhibiting their ability to fully engage in the change process through new ideas. For this reason, the Who Am I? innovation began with a focus on participants’ strengths. Participant strengths were identified outside of the L.E.A.D. group using an on-line assessment. As discussed by Achor, “each time we use a skill ... we experience a

burst of positivity. Even more engaging than using a skill, though is exercising a strength” (2010, p. 55). The assessment completed by the teacher leaders identified each individuals top strengths. Each teacher leader then had the autonomy to select which one of their strengths they wanted to intentionally focus on using at work over the course of the month. The assumption behind this portion of the innovation was that if the teacher leaders were provided with learning opportunities and performance feedback their perception of their engagement would improve. Table 11 provides an overview of the top five strengths (ranked in order) for each of the six participating teacher leaders and the one strength they self-selected to focus on for this innovation.

Table 11

Participant Strengths

Identifier	Top 5 strengths	Self-selected focus
Janet	Love, Fairness, Kindness, Prudence, Honesty	Kindness
Sarah	Humor, Honesty, Perseverance, Creativity, Bravery	Humor
Lindsay	Honesty, Fairness, Perseverance, Judgment, Love	Perseverance
Kate	Love, Appreciation, Gratitude, Judgment, Creativity	Love
Lily	Humor, Kindness, Honesty, Love, Perseverance	Humor
Tammy	Judgment, Honesty, Perspective, Prudence, Bravery	Perspective

Analysis of the participant strengths yielded some interesting information. Although there were 50 unique strength results possible in the on-line assessment, the participating teacher leaders categorized into 13 leaving 37 possible strengths untouched;

with the strengths of “honesty” appearing for five of the six participants and “love” appearing for four of the six participants. The assessment defined the strength of “honesty” in the following way, “You are a straightforward person. You are down to earth and without pretense. Honesty is closely linked to the extent to which your goals accurately represent your implicit interests and values” (*VIA Character Strength Survey*, 2013). The assessment defined the strength of “love” in the following way. “You value close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. This strength is interpersonal and mostly relevant in one-on-one relationships” (*VIA Character Strength Survey*, 2013). Taken in combination, it is easy for one to see that individuals, who value honesty and love, as defined above, would benefit from feedback that provides recognition, encouragement, and information on professional progress. Armed with this information, I could, as the researcher, provide the teacher leaders with feedback on how they were progressing and developing within their identified area and study how that effected their perceived engagement.

Reflections. Participant reflections on the *Who Am I?* innovation revealed that five of the six participants or 83% of the teacher leaders engaged in the strength focused action between the weeks of November 16, 2015 to December 14, 2015. Each participant was asked to reflect on the innovation and how it supported their perceived level of engagement. The following responses support one of the key findings stated in the introduction of this section; *By identifying and exercising professional strength areas in new ways and receiving targeted feedback, teacher leaders perceived an increased sense of engagement, competence, and productivity in the change process at their school.*

When describing her focus on the strength of humor, Lily shared that she had intentionally planned to “track how often she used humor in a productive way and how often her humor was unproductive either for herself or for others.” She shared that her intention behind this was to ensure that her natural strength of humor was “moving meetings and people forward at her school rather than impeding the learning of others or wasting time.” When further prompted to reflect on how she felt this innovation influenced her engagement, Lily shared that she connected this action with her identified purpose from the last L.E.A.D. group. She shared that, in reflection, she realized if her purpose was to “support teachers in being more prepared and confident” she had to ensure that her teachers saw her “taking her job seriously and respecting their time.” Lindsay shared that focusing on her strength of perseverance and knowing that somebody was going to speak to her about her progress made her feel valued. “I felt a sense of accomplishment and I pushed myself a little bit harder and further than I normally would have.” During Tammy’s reflection, she shared that as a result of her focus on perspective she “had a real conversation with a colleague. It was so cool I almost cried.” These positive emotions highlight what Achor (2010) referred to as the “Happiness Advantage.” When describing the effect that working within your strength area and receiving feedback can have on an individual he writes, “you’ll not only start to feel better, but you’ll also start to notice how your enhanced positivity makes you more efficient, motivated, and productive, and opens up opportunities for greater achievement” (Achor, 2010, p. 56).

At the conclusion of the study I revisited the idea of competency and feedback with the teacher leaders and asked them to explain how *Who Am I?* influenced their perception of their ability to engage in the change process at their school directly

addressing the second research question in this study. Kate described her experience in the following way, “I think I am more intentional in my interactions with adults as well as the students that I am working with all of the time.” Tammy shared that she “better understands where her drive comes from - which is not where everyone else's comes from.” So she is “able to focus on that and doing the best job she can to support her teachers.” When asked if they would continue this action after the study was complete, five of the six or 83% of participants reported yes.

L.E.A.D. Group #3

I Can Do This! In order to address how the teacher leaders’ perceptions of their ability to (or lack of ability to) engage in the change process at their school was influenced by participation in the L.E.A.D. groups, I focused the third L.E.A.D. group on the topic of autonomy and goal setting.

“One of the biggest drivers of success is the belief that our behavior matters; that we have control over our future” (Achor, 2010, p. 129). This quote exemplifies how feelings of control at work can increase one’s perception of engagement and led directly to the action driven portion of this innovation. In our third L.E.A.D. group, I asked participants to draw a *t*-chart. On the left side of the *t*-chart I had them write a list of daily challenges they faced. I then asked them to separate those challenges into two categories; “*things I control*” and “*things I do not control.*” The participants then selected one of the items categorized as “*things I control*” that they wanted to focus on for the remainder of the L.E.A.D. group. On the right hand side of their *t*-chart the participants wrote a goal for themselves. They defined what success looked like for accomplishing this goal, and committed to working to implement those steps over the course of the next month. These

actions were grounded in the work on motivation published by Daniel Pink in 2009. Pink stated that by “looking for small measures of improvement each day, individuals can connect with the idea that their actions do have a direct effect on their outcomes” (2009, p. 154). There is also considerable research that shows “individuals are far more engaged when they’re pursuing goals they had a hand in creating” (Pink, 2009, p. 170). Table 12 shows the goals that each teacher leader set for themselves as a result of this innovation.

Table 12

Teacher Leader Goals

Identifier	Goal
Janet	Calendaring for next quarter. Specific days for walk-throughs and specific days for follow-up. Communicate purpose with the teachers.
Sarah	I will set up my field testing times and look through the Argumentative manual to begin to “chunk” it.
Lindsay	I want to collaborate with other teacher leaders from other campuses on the professional development in writing that I am providing.
Kate	Being proactive and calendar out my “to do” list – 2 things each day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Log • Targeted Support People
Lily	I want to focus in the area of science with my teachers. I want to meet with teachers to discover why they may be resistant to this idea.
Tammy	I want to schedule a time each week for a focused conversation with my fellow teacher leader and principal.

Reflections. Participant reflections on the *I Can Do This!* innovation revealed that six of the six participants or 100% of the teacher leaders engaged in the goal focused action between the weeks of December 14, 2015 to January 5, 2016. Each participant was asked to reflect on the innovation of *I Can Do This!* and how it supported their perceived level of engagement. The following responses support one of the key findings stated in the introduction of this section; *By creating and defining short-term attainable professional goals for themselves, teacher leaders perceived an increased sense of*

engagement, autonomy, and accomplishment. When describing how the successful completion of her goal made her feel with regards to engagement, Tammy shared the following,

I would say optimism. I would also say connectedness. Like, wow, we are actually having a conversation ... all three of us about where we are going to go next. Like, we are actually connected to each other and our plan. It felt like a door was opened or a conversation started that we can use to head in the right direction.

Janet described how the process of setting a small, manageable goal was new to her but that it made her feel “proud and professional.”

Sometimes I would get these things in my mind that I wanted to do and they seemed so lofty and I would get discourage. Like, oh well, I will never have time to do all this so I just won’t do it at all. This process helped me slow down and go from an idea to an action. I realized I DID have time and I COULD accomplish this goal. I felt like a real professional.

Sarah shared that the fact that she was “accountable to discuss her goals” made her more motivated and she “procrastinated less.” This ties back to the idea explored in L.E.A.D. group #2 where we discussed competency and feedback. The fact that someone was paying attention and providing constructive feedback was an engaging factor for Sarah to successfully complete her goal.

At the conclusion of the study I revisited the idea of autonomy and goal setting with the teacher leaders and asked them to explain how participation in *I Can Do This!* influenced their perception of their ability to engage in the change process at their school directly addressing the second research question in this study. Lindsay described her experience in the following way, “this short cycle process helped me stay focused and realize that even with all the distractions around here I can get my work done.” When asked if they would continue this action after the study was complete, five of the six or 83% of participants reported yes.

Each L.E.A.D. group focused on one of the key components of engagement as defined by the literature supporting this study. L.E.A.D. #1 focused on relatedness or the sense of purpose where one feels they are adding something positive to the workplace, community, or world. L.E.A.D. group #2 focused on competence or the opportunity to get better at a craft whereby producing better results. This was addressed through the vehicle of strength-based feedback. And finally, L.E.A.D. group #3 focused on autonomy or the freedom to be self-directed. This was addressed through the vehicle of independent goal setting (Deci & Ryan, 2011). Reflections from the teacher leaders revealed that participation in these L.E.A.D. groups positively influenced the teacher leaders' perception of their ability to engage in the change process at their school. This finding is important because we know from Deci and Ryan's work that "the extent to which an individual positively experiences these three needs greatly determines their sense of engagement" (Deci & Ryan, 2011). If schools and districts are to retain these highly-skilled, highly-trained individuals to assist in increasing teacher effectiveness then these methods for positively effecting their sense of engagement can serve as a springboard for professional development delivered to principals and district offices charged with overseeing these individuals.

Findings: Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *What are teacher leaders' perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the innovation?* The data used to build a case for the need for this study showed that the overall retention rate of teacher leaders participating in the TAP System of comprehensive school reform across the state of Arizona was less than half with a total of only 54 of the 114 teacher leaders (47%) remaining in their positions

for the life of the five-year grant. Two main hypotheses were proposed to explain this exodus; first, was that these teacher leaders did not perceive themselves as being engaged in the reform process at their school and second was that the conditions of the day-to-day job responsibilities differed from their initial expectations of the job and they did not feel empowered to make changes to the way they fulfill these responsibilities. In an attempt to be completely transparent, I investigated “where” these teacher leaders were going upon their exit from the teacher leader role. The following section provides the mobility information.

In Wave 1 of implementation where 18 of the 22 (82%) teacher leaders left their position, four (22%) were promoted to school administrators and five (23%) returned to the classroom. The additional nine teacher leaders left the AZ Ready-for-Rigor grant districts. In Wave 2 of implementation where 33 of the 63 (52%) teacher leaders left the position, five (15%) were promoted to school administrators and twelve (36%) returned to the classroom. The remaining 16 teacher leaders left the AZ Ready-for-Rigor grant districts. In Wave 3 of implementation where nine of the 29 (31%) teacher leaders left the position, one (11%) returned to the classroom and eight (89%) left the AZ Ready-for-Rigor grant districts.

As a reminder about the sampling procedures for this study, all participants were teacher leaders as defined by the TAP System. They were responsible for supporting teachers with their individual instructional growth, conducting evaluations and coaching conferences with individual teachers, and providing weekly professional development to clusters of teachers. At the time of this study, four of the six teacher leaders had held their position for five years, one participant had held her position for four years, and the final

participant had held her position for three years. Each participant was asked at the beginning of the study if they intended to return to their position as a teacher leader for the upcoming school year. Three of the six (50%) teacher leaders reported that they hoped to be in a different position, two (33%) participants reported that they intended to return, and one (17%) participant was undecided. At the conclusion of the study and after participating in all three of the L.E.A.D. groups, each participant was asked the same question. Four of the six teacher leaders (66%) reported that they intended to return, one participant (17%) reported that she did not intend to return, and one participant (17%) was undecided. Knowing that there are many factors (in addition to participation in the L.E.A.D. groups) that could have contributed to the teacher leaders' decision about whether or not to stay in their position, I analyzed two questions from our final focus group; *what aspects of the teacher leader position motivate you to stay* and *what aspects of the teacher leader position motivate you to leave?* I analyzed the responses utilizing the engagement topics that were addressed in the L.E.A.D. groups (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) in an attempt to determine the effect the topics may have had on the decisions of the participating teacher leaders. I also analyzed the responses through the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change in an attempt to determine the effect they may have had on the decisions of the participating teacher leaders.

Why Do You Stay?

Upon analysis of the responses to this question, the theme of autonomy emerged as the main engagement construct that influenced the teacher leaders' perceptions of self-retention. Janet discussed the construct of autonomy in the following way,

I have decided that I am pretty much done with the classroom. I've really enjoyed the . . . the autonomy to develop my own schedule. If I come in and need a few minutes to get my act together, I usually have the time. I don't have to be on when the bell rings. There is just so much freedom in this position when compared to the classroom.

Sarah also addressed autonomy when discussing what aspects of the position motivate her to stay. She shared,

I appreciate the flexibility and freedom of some things. And one point while I was still in the classroom but also involved in so many other things, I was finally like, ugh . . . I need time for those things too and they were leadership roles so they were really important to me. So, I guess it's the freedom and flexibility that I have in this role to be more than a teacher.

Tammy shared that she stays because of those "rare moments when she gets to work with a teacher to solve a problem using a process or plan that she thinks is best."

These responses highlight the power of providing teacher leaders with autonomy or the power to be self-directed. Although not directly linked to the goal setting L.E.A.D. group, the concept of fostering a professionally autonomous environment is a key component to what makes teacher leaders want to stay in their positions. Incorporating a goal setting process for teacher leaders, similar to one utilized in L.E.A.D. group #3, could potentially lead to higher retention of these teacher leaders.

The teacher leaders also discussed autonomy through the terms of work-life balance. For example, Lindsay shared that, "as a mom of three youngish children, it is the work schedule, in all honesty, that encourages me to stay. This job allows me to feel like I am valuable here but also have time with my family." She also shared that her kids attend the school where she works so that, "by supporting the teachers that teacher her children, she is actually supporting her family in multiple ways." Lily discussed autonomy through the idea of work-life balance as well,

I love the fact that my schedule matches my children's schedule right now. I can still pick up extra work after school and in the summer if I want to but it is my own decision as to whether or not it fits my schedule. That wouldn't be the case if I were in the classroom right now.

This last quote from Lily summarizes what all six teacher leaders agreed on, the fact that they are motivated to stay in their positions by the level of professional autonomy they are provided. While this autonomy does not always allow them to “do what they do best on a daily basis” they still feel as though it is more than they had when they were in the classroom (Lopez & Sidhu, 2013). The position also allows them to make decisions about time that they think is in the best interest of their work-life situation at the time of this study.

What Makes You Want to Leave?

Upon analysis of the responses to this question, the construct of competence, or the ability to get better at your craft, emerged as the main engagement construct that influenced the teacher leaders' perceptions of self-retention. Janet discussed the construct of competence in the following way,

I want to stay within education but I am getting the itch to leave this position. I've done this. I've grown but no one seems to care if I am continuing to grow and become better at what I do. I would love for someone to offer me something where there would be a lot of new learning and help for me to grow.

Sarah agreed and shared,

I have gained valuable skills and experience here that I needed to learn. But now I've got it and it's like, what's next? I am much more enthusiastic when I am working to figure things out and it's like I've figured this out.

Tammy stated, “there just isn't anything really challenging me anymore. The rigidity of what and how teachers have to teach now has made me less necessary.” This last quote not only addresses the lack of feedback or support for professional progress but

also the political dimension of change. In a time where this school district, like many others, has adopted a highly scripted and rigid curriculum, the perception of how much a teacher leader can actually do with teachers is called into question. The reality is that the political dimension of change is trumping any other effort currently taking place. If we do not make continuing professional growth a technical norm for teacher leaders, we will lose them to places that have normalized this behavior.

Discussion

The purpose of this action research study was to investigate how participation in L.E.A.D. groups influenced the self-perceptions teacher leaders had of their ability to engage in the change process at their schools. The L.E.A.D. groups focused on the engagement constructs of purpose, competency, and relatedness and how teacher leaders could empower themselves to successfully navigate the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change (Oakes, 1992). The underlying goal of this innovation was to provide a counter space where teacher leaders could come together and redefine their roles to accomplish their purpose. Janet shared her feelings regarding the influence of the L.E.A.D. groups in the final focus group in this way:

They helped me to overall think about my strengths and to capitalize on them. For so long I have focused on my weaknesses but I felt so much more successful when I focused on my strengths. I think feeling successful again has motivated me and that is huge because before these groups I was not motivated. I remember now that I have control over what I think and what I can do.

Lily shared her perception of how the L.E.A.D. groups influenced her ability to engage in the change process at her school:

This has been like monthly therapy for me. I can't believe how helpful it has been. We (referring to a fellow teacher leader) are always talking about our attitudes and what we can and cannot control and where we should be focusing

our energy. We didn't do that before these groups. Before we would just complain. I can't believe how negative we were.

These quotes contain information that is critical to understanding how to develop, effectively utilize, and retain these highly trained, highly skilled professionals in our schools. This study examined all information through the lens of the following research questions:

Research Question 1: *How do teacher leaders perceive themselves as engaged in the change process at their school?*

Research Question 2: *How does the use of L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to engage in the change process aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?*

Research Question 3: *What are the teacher leaders' perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the innovation?*

This section presents the culminating discussion of the findings from this study. First, I will first share a brief summary of the assertions of this study. I will then share connections of the results to the literature and theory, discuss implications and limitations of the study and share my personal lessons learned.

Brief Summary

Results from the L.E.A.D. groups yielded information useful for future discussions and training development within schools and districts utilizing teacher leaders to embark on school improvement or reform. Although the small sample size of this study does not allow for generalizability, efforts during this 11 week period provided data regarding actions that contribute to an increased perception of engagement in teacher leaders. The innovation contained three specific actions to increase engagement; self

reflection, exercising a strength, and goal setting. The main assertion was, *without intentional training for schools in the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change, teacher leaders will often be mis-utilized and struggle to perceive themselves as fully engaged in their work of supporting teachers in comprehensive school reform.*

Using Hall and Hord's Concerns Based Adoption Model as a foundation, this training must be more than a one-time event. Rather it needs to be an ongoing process that involves everyone involved in the change. Additionally, *the creation of a counter space to the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change allows teacher leaders to redefine their actions and engage more fully with their role in the change process at their schools.* It may be concluded that teacher leaders are overall optimistic individuals. In spite of things that are outside of their control often consuming their time, they were willing to keep trying, they refused to succumb themselves to the negative aspects of the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change. In the upcoming section, I summarize the discussions surrounding this phenomenological study.

Complementarity of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Over the course of this study, the quantitative data collected through two vetted engagement surveys; the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and the Gallup Q12 Engagement Survey were used in an explanatory sequential manner (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative data was the primary data set used to determine the topic of the innovative L.E.A.D. groups. The L.E.A.D. groups produced qualitative data in the form of teacher leader reflections, artifacts, and shared experiences. This qualitative data was then used to inform and support the quantitative data, thus "providing a broader and more enhanced interpretation allowing for greater confidence in the inferences made from this

study” (Buss & Zambo, 2015). This combined data on the teacher leaders’ perceptions of their engagement in the change process at their school as well as how they were influenced by the L.E.A.D. groups provided a more thorough understanding of the abilities of a teacher leader to operate within the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change.

Discussion

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, *How do teacher leaders perceive themselves as engaged in the change process at their schools?* Comments from the focus group conducted at the beginning of the study and semi-structured interviews conducted throughout the study indicated the participating teacher leaders perceived their engagement in the change process at their school to be largely dependent on factors that were outside of their control. Their discussions demonstrated that they felt least engaged when they had to rely on other peoples’ competence to get things done. This was often the case with regards to their schedules and the day-to-day responsibilities assigned to them. Consider this statement from Tammy in the initial focus group:

My day is just so unpredictable and not in a good way. I mean, I know that unpredictability goes with my job but when someone comes up to you and NEEDS you to take care of something that is totally their responsibility, it’s frustrating. I plan my days and then because they didn’t plan theirs, I have to change everything. How is that supporting teachers? It’s not!

Or Sarah’s statement from the same focus group:

I don’t feel like I have control over anything. Sometimes I think I have gotten to a place where I am making decisions and moving in the right direction to support my teachers and then ... BAM! I am told to hold off on moving forward with those plans and instead asked to do something else. It usually isn’t even something that makes sense, rather something that all of sudden needs to be addressed. I feel like I try to take control but it rarely works. It is so frustrating.

Janet added:

Yeah, that is what I am most troubled by. I can't seem to get any momentum. As soon as I start moving forward it feels like four people step in front of me with reasons why I can't keep going. It drives me insane! It is sad because I try, and I try, and I try but I just can't. Something always seems to come up.

These statements conveyed the discouragement and frustration the teacher leaders experienced on a regular basis in their roles and again supported the call this study makes for intentional training for schools in the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change. The need for this type of training is supported by the literature published on distributed leadership, change theory, and the dimensions of change explored in the earlier sections of this study. Especially evident was the lack of authentic leadership opportunities for these individuals as well as a lack in the normative shift necessary to support their capacity to meaningfully engage in the change process at their school (Harris, 2004). In order for distributed leadership to function effectively several conditions must be met. Most notably, leadership tasks and responsibilities should be pre-planned and aligned with the strengths of the participants (Mascall, Leithwood, Straus, & Sacks, 2008). Based on the comments above from the teacher leaders it was evident that this was not their perception of what was happening in their schools; as they perceived they were often pulled at the last minute to engage in utility type tasks. Due to the nature of the assigned tasks, another key condition of successful distributed leadership was overlooked; the idea that an effective leadership framework specifically defines roles and responsibilities for its members (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003). The teacher leaders in this study often felt as though their individual strengths, skill sets, and plans were secondary to the more immediate pressing needs determined by someone else. The lack of effective implementation of distributed leadership converging with the norms of

the schools examined in this study created an environment of disengagement for the participating teacher leaders (Oakes, 1992).

In spite of all of these factors that were outside of their control, the teacher leaders in this study continued to make attempts to improve their situations. They refused to succumb to the negative aspects of the change processes at their schools and persisted in their attempt to reclaim their personal purpose for becoming a teacher leader in the first place. The discussion around the second research question in this study will focus on how teacher leaders can be cultivated and utilized as true instruments of change in their schools.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *How does the use of L.E.A.D. groups influence the teacher leaders' perceptions of their ability to engage in the change process aimed at improving teacher effectiveness?* The findings of this study established that teacher leaders described their participation in the L.E.A.D. groups as positively influencing their ability to engage in the change process at their school. Through their monthly reflections, the teacher leaders' communicated how the L.E.A.D. groups created a space for them to learn and grow as a professional, redefine their roles for themselves, and reconnect with their personal purpose. During a participant reflection on the first L.E.A.D. group, Kate shared:

It is so nice to be able to slow down and remember why I am here (referring to the role). I mean honestly, this group has helped me to remember that I am 'all in for kids.' And to really mean it ... not just say it! I am here because I want to inspire teachers to be their best selves for kids. How can I do that if I don't slow down and think about what I am doing and how it impacts others?

Janet discussed how the L.E.A.D. group was providing her with the opportunity to professionally grow:

I love that I am learning something new again. It feels like it has been so long since I have grown as a professional or that anyone has cared if I grow as a professional. In the beginning we were learning something new every week it seemed like, but lately ... no one teaches us anything. They just give us information to hand out.

These reflections support the literature produced by Deci and Ryan (2011) on the constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It is widely accepted that the extent to which an individual positively experiences these three constructs greatly determines their sense of personal engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2011; Lencioni, 2007; Pink, 2009).

Through the L.E.A.D. groups, teacher leaders were able to step out of the technical, normative, and political dimensions of their role at their site and step into a counter space that, overtime, supported them in rediscovering the optimism they had as a beginning teacher leader. Through L.E.A.D. group 1, they were equipped with a tool to focus on relatedness and reconnecting with their personal purpose. The influence of this action was highlighted in the quote above from Kate. Her words are describing exactly what Lencioni (2007) wrote about in *The Truth About Employee Engagement*, “human beings need to know that they are helping others. When people lose sight of their impact on other people’s lives, or worse yet, if they feel like the have no impact at all, they begin to disengage” (p. 232). Through L.E.A.D. group 2, the teacher leaders were shown a strategy focused on competence. The influence of this action was highlighted in the quote above from Janet. She speaks to the idea of continuing to progress professionally.

Lencioni (2007) found that “employees who can measure their own progress or contribution are going to develop a greater sense of personal responsibility and

engagement” (p. 236). And lastly, through L.E.A.D. group 3, the teacher leaders’ autonomy was fostered through the action of goal setting. The influence of this action is described in the following quote from Lily:

I realized that I did not have any professional goals before this meeting. I mean sure, I fill out the form that is required of me every year but no one talks to me about them so, what’s the point? I don’t even remember what I wrote. I know that sounds stupid or harsh but I haven’t internalized any of those goals. This was different though. It was small and I picked it and you weren’t judging me. You were just talking to me about it. That was helpful.

The emotions expressed by the teacher leaders after participating in the L.E.A.D. groups depict a much more positive picture for the future of these individuals. Through their words, we can hear a shift from frustration and helplessness to optimism and happiness. The latter emotions are ones the literature supporting this study associates with increased levels of engagement and when fostered are likely to increase the possibility of greater retention (Deci & Ryan, 2011; Lencioni, 2011; Pink, 2009). The discussion around the third research question in this study will focus on teacher leaders’ perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the L.E.A.D. groups.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *What are teacher leaders’ perceptions surrounding retention at the conclusion of the innovation?* The participating teacher leaders in this study had varying levels of experience in education field. Three of the participants had been classroom teachers for fifteen to nineteen years, two for ten to fourteen years, and the remaining participant had been a classroom teacher for five to nine years. At the time of this study, four of the six participants had held their teacher leader position for five years, one participant had held her position for four years, and the final participant had held her position for three years.

As part of the final focus group I encouraged the participants to share why they had decided to become a teacher. Beyond just being interesting, I felt this information could assist in telling the story of who these individuals were and what types of supports might aid in their retention. All six participants shared a slightly unique version of the same story. These were individuals who had either; dreamed of being a teacher from the time they were little, decided to become a teacher because an influential family member had been a teacher, or they didn't believe they were "smart enough" to pursue their first career choice (personal communication, 2016). Their reasons for leaving or staying in the position were explored at length along with their projected retention numbers but of interest to me for discussion here is the fact that not one of these individuals could see themselves returning to the classroom. In fact, not one of them had any desire to be a classroom teacher again. The reasons they gave regarding this decision spoke directly to the technical, normative, and political dimensions of their environments. For example, Kate shared:

Sometimes I think . . . put me back in the classroom. Let me relive it. But then I think about all of the things I would have to deal with. The parents, the behaviors, the new standards, the evaluations. There are just so many hoops to jump through these days and I realize I don't ever want to be back in the classroom.

Lindsay agreed, sharing:

There are so many pressures put on teachers these days. Since I am outside of the classroom, I don't really have to deal with those anymore but the amount of expectations that are continually piled on teachers made me want out. If I was asked to go back into the classroom next year, I wouldn't want to do it. I can sense the feeling of too much time outside of work spent on school. That would be a real struggle between me and my family.

These quotes speak to what I see as the intersection of teaching issues in the change process and leadership issues in the change process. These individuals have a foot

in both worlds. They understand that without good teaching to back up change then nothing will happen but without good leadership to back up the change, nothing will happen either. They are constantly navigating the waters between the classroom and administration. Their entire role is political in nature but even with all of the challenges associated with their work, they still would not leave it to return to the classroom. This speaks to the larger issue behind the current state of our schools and how the individuals within it struggle to truly engage in their work given the continual cycle of change.

Strengths and Limitations

As with all research, there were strengths and limitations associated with this work that deserve examination. One of the primary strengths of this study was the researcher's close relationships with the participating teacher leaders. The nature of the Regional Master Teacher role was that of support, guidance, and coaching. For up to five years, these teacher leaders had received in-depth training from me, engaged in one-on-one coaching sessions with me, and even traveled to national conferences alongside of me. There was a sense of mutual respect and co-learning that was already established between myself and the participants before the study began. The participants valued me as an individual dedicated to their engagement and success in the teacher leader role. This action research study hinged on the perceptions of these individuals and my relationship with them provided a safe place for them to fully express their perceptions – positive or negative. I would be remiss not to acknowledge that some may argue that this could also be a limitation of the study. That because of this long-term relationship, the teacher leaders may have felt a sense of obligation to give responses they thought I wanted or they thought would reflect positively on my innovation. In an attempt to maximize the

validity of my study, I captured as much as I could in my observational field notes and conducted member checks with my participants. I also cross referenced statements from individuals in their semi-structured interviews, with statements from their reflections, and focus group discussions. The findings that emerged from this study were a product of all the teacher leader perceptions not just one or two. I believe that the strong, trusting relationships that I had with the participants is a key condition of the innovation and should be considered by any district or school looking to move forward with a similar innovation.

One limitation of this study was the small sample size. While a sample size of six is appropriate for a phenomenological study, it does not allow for generalizability to the larger teacher leader population (Husserl, 1931). It also should be noted that while the TAP System categorizes both mentor and master teachers as teacher leaders (see section titled Retention), this study only focused on the master teacher role. Efforts will be made in the future to increase the number of participating teacher leaders to determine appropriate next steps for schools and districts looking to duplicate the innovation tested through this research. Another limitation of this study was the short timeframe in which the data was collected and the innovation implemented—a total of 11 weeks. Due to the limited time available to collect data and the time of year in which the study was conducted, up to date perceptions surrounding retention were difficult to capture. The final focus group was conducted in January 2016 and the school year continues until May 2016 for these teacher leaders. Any responses concerning retention should be viewed through the lens of what the teacher leaders felt at the mid year point and it should be noted their perceptions could change over time for a number of factors.

Implications for Future Research and Future Practice

Research

A key component of action research is the belief that multiple, iterative cycles of inquiry lead to a deeper understanding of how to improve an area of concern with ones' practice (Riel, 2011). This section will provide implications for future research derived from my personal reflections of the innovation and findings of this study. While there are many possibilities and options for future research in the area of teacher leader engagement in an environment of school improvement, I consider the most logical next step to be a study that focuses on the perceptions of the administrators involved. The teacher leaders' perceptions were clear. They felt the least engaged when others were determining their daily actions. They felt the least engaged when they had to rely on the planning and organization of others at their school in order to get things done. They felt mis-utilized and under appreciated. It will be important that the voices of the administrators are also heard. They are the individuals that ultimately drive the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change at their schools. They are the individuals that supervise and manage the teacher leaders and often were the ones referred to when discussions surrounding control, organization, and calendaring arose. Without their voices it is difficult to understand the complete picture of the change process at these schools. It will also be important to capture the perceptions of the classroom teachers; the individuals that are supposed to be the primary change agents in any school improvement. As stated by Hall and Hord (2001),

An organization does not change until each member has changed ... there is an individual aspect to organization change. Even when change is introduced to

every member of the organization at the same time, the rate of making the change and of developing skill and competence in using it will vary individually. (p. 7)

While this study presented a comprehensive look at the perceptions of the teacher leaders', they are but one member of the change process at their schools and the perceptions of the administrators and classroom teachers will provide rich discussion for future studies.

Practice

Another key component of action research is the notion that the researcher is striving to improve some aspect of their immediate practice (Riel, 2011). The purpose of this study was to investigate how participation in L.E.A.D. groups influenced the self-perceptions teacher leaders had of their ability to engage in the change process at their schools. This section will provide implications for future practice derived from my personal reflections of the innovation and findings of this study.

The change theory serving as a foundation for this study (CBAM) reminds us that innovation comes in different sizes (Hall & Hord, 2001). The implementation of the TAP System on the part of the Dove School District was a large-scale innovation implementation. Members of the leadership teams, which include teacher leaders, received nine days of intensive training at the beginning of implementation. The trainings were designed around the four elements of the TAP System; multiple career paths, performance-based compensation, ongoing applied professional growth, and instructionally focused accountability. These training were delivered by individuals with high levels of experience with the system; however, upon review of the trainings, it should be noted that very little time was spent on the concept of distributed leadership, with no time spent on the dimensions of change or change theory. Rather, the majority of

the nine days of training were spent on the structures of professional development and expectations surrounding teacher evaluations (*TAP Evaluation and Compensation Guide*, 2010). It should be noted that these elements are also critical to the success or failure of implementation but the disproportionate amount of training in these areas may be seen as a contributing factor to the mis-utilization of the teacher leaders in the Dove School District. With this information and the teacher leaders' perceptions as a guide, trainings must be developed that address the technical, normative, and political dimensions of change (Oakes, 1992). These trainings should be an ongoing process not a one-time event and should highlight the importance of addressing wide-spread, deeply held norms and the technical practices that must be addressed if change is to truly take hold (Hall & Hord, 2001; Oakes, 1992).

In addition to training on the dimensions of change and change theory, I recommend that schools and/or districts embarking on school improvement develop a counter space to these dimensions for teacher leaders as we did with the L.E.A.D. groups. The findings of this study established that, while a small innovation, the L.E.A.D. groups positively influenced the teacher leaders' ability to engage in the change process at their school. This space provided an opportunity for them to learn and grow as professionals, define their roles for themselves, and connect with their personal purpose; experiences that were critical to engagement (Bakker & Leiter, 2010).

Personal Lessons Learned

Engaging in this work for the past three years has taught me one major lesson and that is that I am a practitioner at heart. The Doctorate of Education and Innovation program at Arizona State University required that I conduct cycles of action research

over the course of three years alongside of coursework that taught us proper research and academic writing techniques. There was discussion from my professors and classmates as to whether this made the program more or less rigorous than a traditional Ph.D. program. There were times I indulged in the rhetoric that it was somehow a lesser doctoral degree. After conducting the previous cycles of action research, designing the 11-week innovation study, and completing this dissertation I can honestly say that this has been the most intense process of my professional life. With the goal of action research being to make effective changes in your local context, I became deeply invested in the individuals and environment that I was studying. I began to view myself as an advocate for them and their challenges. I found it difficult to step away from the study once it was “complete” and am anxious to share this work with other teacher leaders, schools, and districts. I see how this work can be shared, modified, and continually improved upon and am eager to get back into the schools to support leadership teams in making it happen.

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APPENIDX A
PRE/POST SURVEY

Likert Scale Items – 0 = Never, 6 = Always

1. At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy.
2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
3. Time flies when I am working.
4. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
5. I am enthusiastic about my job.
6. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
7. My job inspires me.
8. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
9. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
10. I am proud of the work that I do.
11. I am immersed in my work.
12. I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
13. To me, my job is challenging.
14. I get carried away when I am working.
15. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
16. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
17. At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

Demographic Data

1. Please indicate your gender.
2. Please indicate your years of experience as a teacher in the classroom.
3. Are you highly qualified in a content area?
 - a. If yes, please indicate the content area in which you are highly qualified.

4. Please indicate your years of experience as a teacher leader.
5. Is teaching your first career?
 - a. If teaching is not your first career, please share what was your first career.

Likert Scale Items – 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor cares about me as a person.
6. Someone at work encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission/purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has spoken to me about my progress as a teacher leader.
12. In the last year, I have had the opportunities at work to learn and grow as a teacher leader.

Open Response Items

1. In your experience as a teacher leader, who has most often provided you with recognition or praise, Title only – name is not necessary.
2. In your experience as a teacher leader, who has most often encouraged your development? Title only – name is not necessary.

3. In your experience as a teacher leader, who has spoken to you about your progress most often? Title only – name is not necessary.
4. In your experience as a teacher leader, who has most often provided you with opportunities to learn and grow? Title only – name is not necessary.

Likert-Scale Items – 1 = No Autonomy, 5 = Complete Autonomy

1. Autonomy is defined as self-governance or ruled by the self. Autonomy in the workplace means you are empowered to work in a manner, at a time, with a focus that you have determined to be most effective for you. Please rate your current level of autonomy as a teacher leader.
2. Purpose is defined as the connection to a cause that is larger than yourself. It is what gets us out of bed in the morning. Purpose in the workplace means you understand your role in achieving the mission of the organization. Please rate your current level of autonomy as a teacher leader.
3. Mastery is defined as the urge to get better and better at something that matters. Mastery in the workplace means you are encouraged to grow and learn in your master of your role. Please rate your current level of mastery as a teacher leader.

APPENDIX B

TEACHER LEADER ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL REFORM

PARTICIPANT REQUEST

Dear Teacher Leader,

As a TAP Teacher Leader, you are part of a unique group of individuals charged with teaching in the classroom while also serving as a formal leader on your campus. Your time is focused on supporting your peers through:

- professional development on best practices (cluster)
- one-on-one coaching sessions focused on instructional refinement areas (conferences)
- short cycles of reflection centered around improving student achievement (IGP's).

As part of my doctoral study, I am soliciting the help of current TAP Teacher Leaders. I am interested in studying concrete methods to use in training and retaining high quality individuals to this position. As a TAP Teacher Leader, I am asking that you consider participating in a semester long study that will provide you with training opportunities targeted at increasing your engagement in your role, team-building opportunities aimed at connecting you with a network of others in your role, and reflection opportunities that provide support in improving your skills as a mentor.

As a TAP Teacher Leader, I ask that you attend an introductory meeting scheduled to take place at a time designated to support as many participants as possible. This session should last one hour and will take place at or near the Avondale district office. During this time, I will share more detailed information regarding this study. Please note that this study is designed to be a support to your engagement and retention as a teacher leader and will require approximately four hours of participation from you a month for four months (a total of 16 hours between September and December).

This study is completely separate from my supporting role as Avondale's Regional Master Teacher Leader. The results of this study may be used in presentations, and/or publications. If used, all of the information will be presented without the identification of any participants. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact Sarah Saltmarsh at 623.451.7377 or sarah.saltmarsh@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. If you agree to participate, indicate so ([here](#)), you will sign an official participation waiver at the session.

Sincerely,
Sarah Saltmarsh

Sarah Saltmarsh, M.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate
Arizona State University

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Were you able to exercise (*Find the Meaning, Who Am I, and I Can Do This*) since we last met?
2. If so, what did you notice as you engaged in this action?
3. Are you likely to continue this action?
 - a. Why or Why Not?

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Why did you get into teaching initially?
2. What aspects of the job as a teacher leader “make” you stay?
3. What aspects of the job as a teacher leader would “make” you leave?
4. How have the conditions of comprehensive school reform affected your engagement in your work?
5. How involved do you perceive yourself in the comprehensive school reform effort on you campus?
6. What else should I know to accurately tell your story?